

A CHRIST-CENTERED RENEWAL:
THE GROWTH OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH SOUTHERN PROVINCE
FROM 1877 TO 1930

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For my wife Karen and her patience

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PREFACE

The motivation for this study, along with my pastoral experience of a smaller congregation came several years ago when the Moravian leadership charged its ministers to think about ways to increase the membership of their churches. While studying the history of the Moravian Church at the Moravian Theological Seminary, I was introduced to the life and work of Bishop Edward Rondthaler. The thesis demonstrates that Rondthaler led his province by teaching a Christ-centered theology, which this theology helped to promote revival and evangelism within the province. These factors resulted in an increase in membership.

I want to thank Dr. Al Frank (posthumously), who first recommended, while he was guiding me through a directed study of Moravian history that the life of Bishop Edward Rondthaler might be worth my examination. I was fortunate to have Dr. C. Daniel Crews available to give of his time to read the manuscripts and offer his useful historical insights, and for that I am thankful. I am grateful for my wife Karen, and Julie Long a member of my congregation, whose proof reading of the manuscripts provided helpful suggestions and needed corrections. I express my appreciation to the Moravian Archives for offering their assistance over a period of three years, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Library located at Wake Forest University for allowing a non-student to use their facilities for study and research. Lastly, thanks to Dr. Garth Rosell and Dr. Robert Mayer for providing invaluable guidance for this work.

ABSTRACT

This thesis project focused on a period of time for the Moravian Church of America Southern Province from 1877 to 1930. The Rt. Rev. Edward Rondthaler was its most significant leader and he led the Province during this time period to a notable membership increase. This increase was the result of a Christ-centered theology. This Christ-centered theology prompted the province to a commitment toward evangelism. The evangelism was promoted through revivals, missions and discipleship.

INTRODUCTION

The Moravian Church of America Southern Province has been in membership decline since 1970.¹ Looking closer to current day statistics for year ending 2008 we find that we are still in decline.² As a pastor in the Moravian Church this writer is interested in any periods of church history where church membership increased. There was a period of time for the Moravians in the Southern Province, where the church membership quadrupled.³ This span of time can be isolated to a fifty-three year period from 1877 to 1930, and during that time the most significant leader of the Moravian Church was The Rt. Reverend Edward Rondthaler. According to C. Daniel Crews and Richard Starbuck the decision to hire Bishop Edward Rondthaler as pastor of Salem congregation “had more far-reaching effect on the life and future of the Province than any other since the calling of Frederic William Marshall to Wachovia.”⁴ The evidence will demonstrate that Rondthaler was the definitive leader of the Moravian Church Southern Province during this 50 year period and that he led the province during a time of significant membership increase. This increase was the result of a Christ-centered theology that prompted the province to a commitment toward evangelism through revivals, missions and discipleship.

¹ C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 832. Statistics of the Southern Province list the number of Moravians in 1970 at 22,357 compared to 19,764 in 2000.

² Moravian Church in America, *Directory and Statistics Moravian Church in North America Northern and Southern North America*, (Bethlehem, PA: Board of Communication, 2010), 107. The total membership for Southern Province for year ending December 31, 2008 was 16,678.

³ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 395. In 1890 only thirteen years after Bishop Rondthaler arrived in Salem, there were a total of twenty Moravian congregations and places of worship in the Southern Province. They were located in North Carolina and Virginia. 428; Moravian Church in Northern and Southern Provinces, *Directory and Statistics* (Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Communication, 2009), 103-04. As of December 31, 2008 there were a total of 16,125 members in the Moravian Church Southern Province with fifty-seven congregations, located in Florida, Georgia, Virginia and North Carolina.

⁴ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 405.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

Some that might say that it is not fitting that one man is singled out as the prominent leader in the Moravian Church Southern Province. However, if we review his body of work, the importance and duration of the positions he held, and the responsibility he carried we have no choice. It is interesting that a pastor from the Northern Province would answer a call to serve a church in the post Civil War south. But, answer it he did and he would remain in the town of Salem for the entirety of his life in service to Christ and the Southern Province.

The Ancestry

The ancestry of Bishop Edward Rondthaler is important because it demonstrates that his family of origin had roots in the work of the church and specifically the Moravian church. It begins with the earliest known ancestor whose name is unknown, but who was born in Austria around 1700 and was living in Salzburg when he was exiled to Prussia by the Church of Rome due to his Protestant belief.¹ Rondthaler's great-grandfather, Albert Rondthaler, was described by his son Emmanuel as a servant of the Lord who had enormous passion for his work and endured many hardships for his faith and died at the age of forty-eight.²

Rondthaler's grandfather, Emmanuel went to minister to the single brethren at Sarepta, Russia in 1795, was ordained a deacon there, and served for ten years. He left Sarepta and in 1806 he made the journey to America to pastor a Moravian church at

¹ Walser Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler* (Bethlehem, PA: Walser Allen, 1966), 8.

² Northern Province Archives, *The 78 Edward Rondthaler Collection, Memoir of the married Br. Emmanuel Rondthaler, Trans. for the Missionary Intelligencer for 1849*, (Bethlehem, PA: Northern Province Archives), 176.

York, Pennsylvania. In September of that same year he married Catharine Wuensch and the union was blessed with one daughter. Catharine passed away in 1808. He later married Christina Toon and from this union came five sons and two daughters. Emmanuel served Nazareth Moravian Church in Pennsylvania until he retired. Emmanuel's marriage to Maria Christina Toon brought five sons and all but one son, who died at birth, were educated at Nazareth Hall in Pennsylvania. Three of the four remaining sons attended the Moravian Theological Seminary and became ordained ministers.³

Edward was the third son of Emmanuel Rondthaler, and was Rondthaler's father. Edward Sr. was an ardent student and taught at Nazareth Hall for six years. He accepted the pastorate of Schoeneck Moravian Church and shortly thereafter he married Miss Sarah Louisa Rice.⁴

According to Rondthaler's membership card at Home Moravian Church he was the son of Edward and Sarah Elizabeth Rondthaler. He was born on July 24, 1842 in Schoeneck, Pennsylvania while his father was serving as the pastor of Schoeneck Moravian Church.⁵ Rondthaler was affected as a young man by the deaths of his two brothers, Howard and Owen, and a sister, Helen. He and his sister, Mary, were the only two children to reach adulthood. Rondthaler was only twelve years old when his mother passed away; and a year later his father Edward followed Sarah to his eternal rest leaving Rondthaler and his sister as orphans. The loss of his mother and father created sensitivity

³ The Northern Province Archives, *Rondthaler Collection*, 178.

⁴ Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler*, 9-11.

⁵ Home Moravian Church, *Home Church Membership Record*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Home Church, 2009). The Bishop gives his mother the name Sarah Elizabeth Rice compared to Allen's Sarah Louisa Rice.

in his heart that forever made him a blessing to children with similar life circumstances.⁶ An example of his tenderness for children was found in his personal Bible study labeled *Christ Blessing Little Children* where he searched the scriptures, Luke 18:15-17 and Mark 10:13-16 and he writes these words "The K of G belongs in a peculiar manner to little children" and "It is by labor that we return to the natural dispositions of children, humility and simplicity."⁷ He believed that the churches along with the family were obligated to provide biblical training for the children and make a deliberate effort to do so.

As a young man Rondthaler followed in the footsteps of his father and two of his uncles by attending Nazareth Hall from 1853 until 1859.⁸ He was a student who made good use of his time and took advantage of the classical studies. These traits would prove valuable in later years for his constant pursuit to grow intellectually.⁹ According to Rondthaler this was not unlike his father:

My father was a very intense student. In my own school days, teachers who had heard the traditions of his nightly studies warned me against a similar excess. He had read Virgil as a child, and it was a disappointment to him that I could not do it at age ten. It is one of my remembrances how excitedly he walked the floor and how despairingly he remonstrated with hands and arms as I tearfully blundered over the Latin verb *fero*.¹⁰

⁶ J. Kenneth Pfohl, *Memoir of Edward Rondthaler*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1931), 45.

⁷ Edward Rondthaler Jr., *Personal Notes, Exegesis Vol. 2, No. 5* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 9. The abbreviation of "K" and "G" in Rondthaler's notes represents the kingdom of God as it comes from the gospel of Mark 10:13-16.

⁸ H.H. Hacker, *Nazareth Hall an Historical Sketch and Roster of Principles, Teachers and Pupils* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1910), 128. The Bishop's two uncles Ambrose who was a teacher from 1832-35 and Emmanuel who taught from 1832-1839. His father Edward was a teacher from 1864-65 and then a principal in 1853-54.

⁹ Pfohl, *Memoir of Edward Rondthaler*, 45.

¹⁰ Walser Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler* (Bethlehem, PA: Walser Allen, 1966), 9-10.

Rondthaler enrolled at the Moravian Theological Seminary in September of 1859. This prepared him for his personal call to ministry service. His tenure lasted for four years and during that time he became smitten by study and enjoyed a broad range of reading, especially the original languages. The most blessed gift during his time at Moravian seminary was an enriching experience with God's grace through Christ. This personal experience of God's grace made for a commitment to a life for the work of God's kingdom.¹¹ For more information on the Moravian Theological Seminary see note.¹²

Rondthaler graduated from seminary in 1862 and was fortunate enough to spend a year abroad in Europe studying at the University of Erlangen in Bavaria. While there, he met with some of the theologians of his day. He was also provided the opportunity to travel and gain an understanding of the economic and social diversity of Europe. Another positive aspect of Rondthaler's trip was the amount of walking he did while touring the various cities. This helped to cause a metamorphous, from a person who was inclined to health problems to a more healthy body. Upon the Bishop's return from Europe he began to teach at Nazareth Hall in 1864.¹³

The Early Years

Shortly thereafter Bishop Rondthaler accepted the call to serve as pastor of Brooklyn Moravian Church in New York on September 1, 1865. He was active in his pastoral duties, which included the Young Men's Meetings, Missionary Meetings,

¹¹ J. Kenneth Pfohl, *Memoir of Edward Rondthaler*, (Raleigh, NC., Edwards and Broughton Company, 1931), 45.

¹² J. Taylor and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church, The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722-1957*, (Winston-Salem, NC., Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, 1967), 232. There was a conference of ministers held in Bethlehem from October 8-30, 1802. One of the two important decisions made there was to begin a Moravian Theological Seminary. On October 3, 1807 the Seminary began its work.

¹³ Pfohl, *Memoir of Edward Rondthaler*, 46.

evening lectures and prayer services.¹⁴ Sadly, the church no longer exists.¹⁵ Rondthaler also maintained a discipline of reading a wide range of topics including books on theology such as George Park Fisher's *History of Doctrine*.¹⁶ He read history with *Josephus' Antiquities*.¹⁷ He also read William Wilberforce's *Practical View of Christianity* and Augustus Neander's *Life of Christ In its Historical Connexion and Historical Development*, which furthered his historical and pastoral studies.¹⁸

While at Brooklyn Moravian church he married Mary E. Jacobson. Their marriage would last for sixty-three years. As stated earlier, Rondthaler's health was of concern, even though his year in Europe had improved the situation. This concern was not unknown to his wife Mary. On her wedding day Mary Rondthaler overheard a guest say, "What a pity that such a lovely young girl will be a widow in a year!" Mary knew that her husband's parents had died young, so she took the responsibility of caring for her husband and she made her husband's health part of her call to ministry.¹⁹

There were two children born to this union, a daughter Alice, and a son Howard. According to the *Record of Moravian Ministers 1898 to 1923* there was another daughter Bishop Rondthaler and Mary had named Estella Theodora who was born January 27, 1879 in Salem, North Carolina and died on June 25, 1879.²⁰ This was also confirmed by

¹⁴ [Edward Rondthaler?], *Church Register of the Moravian Church 1853 for Brooklyn Moravian Church*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Archives). There were no page numbers so the information was located by date January 7-9, April 2, and March 3, 1867.

¹⁵ *Northern Province Statistical Listings, Daily Text for 1946*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives).

¹⁶ Edward Rondthaler, *Notebook, Books of Special Importance for Pulpit Work, No. 2*, November 7, 1905, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

¹⁷ Edward Rondthaler, *Notebook for Bible History, vol. 1, no. 5* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2009), 1, 13.

¹⁸ Edward Rondthaler, *Notebook, EDW. Rondthaler*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2009) From the Library of The Right Rev. Edward Rondthaler, Rondthaler said "Books which I remember to have begun in Brooklyn, but not finished up to October 11, 1870.

¹⁹ Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler*, 18.

²⁰ Moravian Archives, *The Record of the Moravian Ministers, 1898 to 1923*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Archives), 32.

*People's Press (Salem, North Carolina).*²¹ Alice married Rev. Arthur Chase, an Episcopal minister from Ware, Massachusetts and Howard served as President of Salem College.²² He was also consecrated a Bishop in the Moravian Church.²³

Another significant event that occurred while the Rondthalers were at Brooklyn was the destruction of the church and parsonage by a fire in 1868:

September 24th "We little thought that this Wednesday would be the last, held in the old church. On Thursday afternoon Sept. 24 a little after noon a paint-shop in Myrtle Ave. caught fire. It was separated from the parsonage only by Mr. Booth's carpenter-shop & stable. In less than 5 minutes after the smoke was perceived to (unintelligible-word) from the shop & almost before the alarm of fire had been given the flamed had already reached the third story bedroom windows."²⁴

This tragedy caused the Rondthalers to travel to Bethlehem where Sarah's parents were residing until some decisions could be made. The congregation at Brooklyn took immediate action and on October 2 they decided the building of a new church and parsonage should be undertaken, and the work was completed on October 10th 1871.²⁵

Rondthaler's work as the pastor of Brooklyn Moravian ended after accepting a call to the First Moravian Church of Philadelphia. His final sermon was on Acts 20:32 and he concluded his ministry with an afternoon Sunday school meeting. He served as pastor for 1865 to 1873, totaling eight years and four months in Brooklyn. He was dearly loved by the Brooklyn congregation and the feelings were reciprocated by evidence in his letter to the Board of the First Moravian Church of Philadelphia.²⁶

²¹ Robert M. Topkins, *Death Notices from the People's Press Salem, NC 1851-1892* (Winston-Salem, NC: Forsyth County Genealogical Society, 1998), 308.

²² Pfohl, *Memoir of Edward Rondthaler*, 46

²³ Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler*, 47.

²⁴ [Edward Rondthaler?], *Church Register of the Moravian Church 1853 for Brooklyn Moravian Church*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Archives). September 24, 1868.

²⁵ [Rondthaler?], *Church Register of the Moravian Church 1853*, September 29th, October 2nd.

²⁶ [Rondthaler?], *Church Register of the Moravian Church 1853*, December 28th, 1873.

Dear R I McClatchey,

Dear Brother,

Your kind letter of the 29th was received last Tuesday had given me much pleasure. I am heartily obliged to you for the cordial wishes which you have expressed in behalf of the congregation & the Board of Elders as well as yourself. It is certainly a great help to me, in beginning a new pastorate to have so affectionate a feeling existing toward me. I accept it as coming from our dear Lord who has given me the call to serve among you and am heartily grateful for it. Having as yet heard nothing definite with regard to your plans & arrangements, it would be premature on my part to set any time of my coming to Philadelphia. I shall therefore await further communications from you. Meanwhile may we all be under the gracious guidance of our Savior. In parting from a people who have been very dear to me & who are grieving too greatly over my removal and in coming into a new field of labor among you. I shall need your prayers in my behalf, & the affectionate tone of your letter leads me to believe that I shall have them. With kind regards to every member of the Board, I am your brother.

Edward Rondthaler

Figure 1. A Letter to the Board of Elders of the First Moravian Church of Philadelphia.

Source: Edward Rondthaler, *Letter to Dr. R I McClatchey*: First Moravian Church Philadelphia (Brooklyn: December 5, 1873), (Bethlehem, Pa: Moravian Archives).

Rondthaler did answer the call and arrived at the First Moravian Church of Philadelphia on January 3, 1874. His introductory sermon was from 2 Corinthians 5:19. Later that day he addressed teachers, children, and friends of the Sunday school. He was involved in various activities similar to his work in Brooklyn. These activities included

Teacher's Meetings, the Young Men's Christian Union, Mission Society, Minister's Aid Society, and Young Men's Devotional Meetings.²⁷

Rondthaler makes note of a revival spirit spreading throughout the community during the time of the Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey meetings.²⁸ He also makes note of his six hundred and seventy-three pastoral visits for the year.²⁹ Rondthaler suffered from typhoid fever which caused him to be bed-ridden from September 27, 1876 until December 17 of the same year. After four years of serving the congregation in Philadelphia Rondthaler accepted another call to ministry and this call would be his last. He preached his farewell sermon on October 11, 1877 from the text of Acts 20:32.³⁰ His pastorate was considered successful.³¹ Sadly, the First Moravian Church of Philadelphia is no longer a Moravian church.³²

²⁷ Edward Rondthaler, *Record Book of the First Moravian Church Philadelphia January 1, 1867-October 24th 1904*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Archives,), Jan. 3, 4, 9, 19, 21, 26, 1874. *The Moravian*, vol. 110, no. 8 (August 1965) (Bethlehem, PA: Board of Christian Education, 1965), 33.

²⁸ Rondthaler, *Record Book of the First Moravian Church Philadelphia*, Dec. 31, 1875. D.L. Moody was as evangelist and Ira Sankey was his music leader.

²⁹ Rondthaler, *Record Book of the First Moravian Church Philadelphia*, Dec. 31, 1875.

³⁰ Rondthaler, *Record Book of the First Moravian Church Philadelphia*, Dec. 1876, October 1877.

³¹ Pfohl, *Memoir of Edward Rondthaler*, 47.

³² F. P. Stocker, *The Moravian*, vol. 110, no. 8 (August 1965) (Bethlehem, PA: Board of Christian Education, 1965), 33. The First Moravian Church of Philadelphia was discontinued on July 25, 1965 and its members "to some extent become the successor of the First Church of Philadelphia."

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Salem Church

On October 19, 1877 Bishop Rondthaler arrived at Salem, North Carolina. The Salem congregation was the largest and considered by many the most influential church in the southern province. Rondthaler's first sermon was on October 21, 1877.¹

The years between 1878 and 1885 were a combination of struggle and optimism. In 1878 the financial situation in Salem and the surrounding areas was considered by Rondthaler to be difficult. He expressed humility to God in respect to the number of professing Christians that had fallen away in their walk with Christ. His expressed desire was for all true believers to pray for the souls of those who had slipped back into worldliness in the hope that our Lord would move in their lives and they would return.² There were several activities of worship and ministry going on at Home church, all of which seemed to be well attended.³ It was Rondthaler's belief that the services and their success were a result of prayer:

In order that it may be well kept up and even increased those who love the Lord need constantly to pray for the out pouring of the Spirit of God. He can do far more in filling a church with devout hearers than any man can perform however popular. And if we pray for the Spirit we should also work in the ways of the Spirit. And one of His ways is that wherein we constantly seek after those who are in danger of becoming such. Most especially would we commend the prayer-meetings of 1878 to every one of you. Six days of this world's trial and temptation make a pretty wide stream to be bridged over with a consistent Christian profession. It is a safe thing, therefore, to plant a strong buttress of

¹ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877-1927* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, 1928), 6.

² Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 13.

³ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 2. Some of the services involved the Sunday morning and evening worships, the Wednesday evening Bible Study, the Friday Young Peoples Class and the monthly Foreign Mission meetings.

united prayer in the middle of this rushing stream of worldliness, and thus help hold the week for the Christian life.⁴

Along with the emphasis on prayer, missions were also important to the congregation of Home church and this was confirmed by the Home Missionary Society and its ongoing investigation into the prospects of beginning new churches.⁵

Bishop Rondthaler writes these words pertaining to Wednesday night Bible Study. “The Wednesday evening meetings are probably the best criterion of the spiritual condition of the congregation. They are the barometer, which most quickly shows the increase or the decrease of the warmth of love toward the Saviour.”⁶ He also writes in relation to the Spiritual welfare of his congregation with these words. “We need at the opening of the New Year, for the converted, and the unconverted, for pastor and for people, a baptism of the Holy Spirit; let us ask and seek and knock together at the door of grace, that the Lord may rain righteousness upon us and make us more fully what we ought to be in His holy sight.”⁷

Bishop Rondthaler was elected to the Provincial Elders Conference in 1880, a position he would retain for fifty years.⁸ The Provincial Elders Conference is a committee elected by Synod. The Elders Conference was responsible for the overseeing and managing of the ministerial concerns of both the congregations and the ministers who

⁴ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 2-3.

⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 4. For a brief history of Salem Congregation (Home Church) you can go to www.moravianarchives.org then go to *History*, then go to *Salem Congregation a Brief History*. You can also go to the *Wachovia Moravian* and select a specific year and scroll to the *Church at Home* section for monthly activities of several churches beginning from 1895 to 1970.

⁶ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 16.

⁷ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 18.

⁸ C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 531.

supply them.⁹ He also served on the Southern Province Commission, which was in dialogue with the Northern Union Commission working toward a merger of the Northern and Southern Province. This merger was sought out by the South due to the financial hardships that they were experiencing. It was the hope of the Southern Province that a merger into the larger and more financially stable Northern Province would bring some relief and hope for the future. There were discussions between the two parties, but due to irreconcilable differences from both parties the merger failed.¹⁰

It was Rondthaler who was sent as a representative to discuss the details with the Northern Province Commission on September 20, 1882. According to his diary, after a day of disappointing discussions he writes, "Having received the answer of the Northern Commission today, was rendered so anxious by it, that I did not retire till near two and did not sleep until much later,"¹¹ Rondthaler, along with Lewis Christian Rights were the two Southern Province Commission representatives who would not sign the agreement for the merger on September 8, 1883.¹² "The Moravian" a weekly newspaper published an article explaining that the Northern Province felt that harmony was lost and that the negotiations should be discontinued.¹³

⁹ Moravian Church Southern Province, *Book of Order*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church Southern Province, 2002), 98-99. The Provincial Elders Conference should inform the Bishops of any crisis or need. They call Ministers to service and determine the need for pastoral care. They call ministers to specialized ministry. They meet with Boards of congregations for appraisal of the pastor and congregation. They foster unity and set goals for the Province. They maintain oversight with boards and agencies.

¹⁰ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 415-419. The Northern and Southern Provinces were in financial straits, with the South experiencing the worst of it. The Northern Province was willing to help the South, but within the same guidelines as it had already established for its own churches. According to some of the leaders in the south these guidelines would have forced the closing of many of the rural churches.

¹¹ Edward Rondthaler, *Diary of 1882, Sept. 20*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 123-24.

¹² Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 413, 417.

¹³ [Author ?] *The Moravian, The Proposed Union of the Southern with the Northern Province*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, November, 1883), 760. "After this document, at the special request of the Southern Commission, had been drawn up by the Northern, signed by all its members and forwarded to the

Revivals were an important part of the growth of the Southern Province, which Rondthaler nurtured. Even before he came to the Southern Province the Province had experienced renewal by way of the revival meetings. These began with the Reverend Christian Lewis Rights of Friedberg Moravian Church and the services he held there. These revival services were continued also at Macedonia Moravian Church with positive results.¹⁴ Rondthaler himself was familiar with revival meetings due to his time in Philadelphia and the Dwight L. Moody revival services he and his wife attended in 1876.¹⁵ Even though Rondthaler wrote in his diary that “Moody was the busiest man he had ever met” the historical evidence is not conclusive that he or Sarah ever officially met him.¹⁶ Rondthaler also met evangelist William A. (Billy) Sunday in 1925 during a series of services in Winston-Salem.¹⁷ The most significant promotion of the gospel was the services held at Elm Street Chapel on September 11, 1886. There at the Elm Street Chapel Prayer Meeting the Spirit of God was manifested. The meetings lasted for seven weeks followed by two weeks of prayer and instruction at Home Chapel.¹⁸ The Reverend Samuel Groenfeldt, the pastor of evangelism for the Northern Province, held revival services in four different churches in 1912. The Reverend John Greenfield also from the Northern Province held revival services, as well as Br. E.S. Hagen of New Dorp New

Southern Commission, the latter reported that several of its members were unwilling to affix their signatures, and deemed the proposed union, under extreme circumstances, to be unwise.”

¹⁴ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 398-399. The revival lasted five weeks with 51 professing they had found peace and 41 joined Friedberg.

¹⁵ Edward Rondthaler, *Diary of Edward Rondthaler, 1876* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), “Jan. 10, Went to Mr. Sankey’s praise meeting. Jan. 11, Went to Mr. Moody’s Bible Reading on Peter. Attended with my wife in the evening. Mr. Moody spoke to a crowded house on deliverance of the captives. Jan. 16, Went with Mary to Mr. Moody’s last Sunday morning meetings.”

¹⁶ Edward Rondthaler, *Daily Miscellaneous, Private Memorabilia, 1842-1931*, Notebook 13, vol. 16, no. 2 (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 38.

¹⁷ Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler*, 34.

¹⁸ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 69.

York Moravian Church held services for two weeks at Home Church with great spiritual results.¹⁹

The Salem Congregation

The Provincial Elders Conference of 1877 made a decision based on an existing need within the communities of Winston and Salem. At that time in the communities there were families who did not want to travel to Salem for worship, but at the same time did not desire to attend another denomination. This was creating a teaching void, especially among the young people. The solution was to enlist three newly graduated seminary students James E. Hall, Byron Spaugh and George F. Bahnson for home mission work.²⁰ The PEC decision was made shortly before the arrival of Bishop Rondthaler.

In 1878 Rondthaler renamed the Salem Sunday school the Home School due to a desire to separate it from the remaining Sunday schools in Winston and Salem. This name was soon attached to the church as well and the former Salem Congregation came to be referred to as Home Church and it is to this day.²¹ There was continued growth in the Home Congregation due to revivals and the work of the Sunday school programs. This work directly within the towns of Salem and Winston gave Home Church a sense of ownership and a vested interest in the future success for all concerned. This sense of ownership and responsibility was felt with Rondthaler since he was the pastor at Home Church and a member of the Provincial Elder Conference.²²

¹⁹ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877-1927*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1928), 346, 305, 366, 378.

²⁰ C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 428-429.

²¹ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 8.

²² Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 81.

According to Rondthaler the Sunday school programs grew to a total of nine hundred and ninety-six total participation in 1887.²³ They continued to be an agent of growth throughout the years. Rondthaler along with the Elders worked to have unity among the growing Chapels as Rondthaler in 1890 states, "Doubtless much care and wisdom will be needed to perfect the practical working of this principle that we have one congregation in several distinct fields of activity."²⁴ This method of managing the Salem Congregation was adequate at the early stages, but as Home Chapel continued to become increasingly larger the necessity for change was obvious. Rondthaler in 1898 writes, "The general arrangement of our work has during the past year still shown itself to be satisfactory, although, doubtless further efforts will be necessary in order to deepen the unity of the Church so that every member...may be thoroughly united with every other member in the brotherhood and sisterhood of one congregation."²⁵ By 1901 the increase in churches and membership made it necessary to modify Rondthaler's role as pastor of Salem Congregation to a broader one. He maintained the role of senior pastor while incorporating the use of associate pastors to help him in the ministry. Then in 1908 the Salem Congregation modified its constitution so that each church or chapel would have its own pastor, but Rondthaler remained in a pastoral role of leadership.²⁶

However, Rondthaler does make note in 1916 that there was an insufficient number of young people who wanted to enter the ministry. The lay leaders, men and

²³ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 75. The churches involved were Home the mother church and its satellite churches which consisted of Elm St., East Salem, Centerville and Moravian Colored. Hope with sixty and Oak Grove with one hundred and ten, where the support of Home had helped to make their programs successful.

²⁴ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 99.

²⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 167.

²⁶ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 463, 466. Rondthaler, *Memorabilia*, 195. For more information concerning the history of the Salem Congregation go to www.moravianarchives.org then go to "History" and then go the "A History of the Salem Congregation."

women alike, used their talents to go out and to make sure the Sunday schools were remaining strong.²⁷ The significance of the success of the Sunday school program in light of Rondthaler was that he was the pastor of Home congregation for thirty-one years in which he helped lead the younger congregations.

Pastor Rondthaler was consecrated a Bishop of the Moravian Church in 1891. He writes in his diary:

April Saturday 11th very heavy rain with thunder deafening during the night. Up at 6. Spent the day with Bishops. In the evening they held a very affecting prayer, kneeling with me. At noon my years as a presbyter are closing. If it be the will of God that I should be advanced one degree, may it be for the good of souls and for God's glory.²⁸

Moravian Bishops are responsible for the spiritual health of the Moravian church. They are considered the pastors to the pastors and are often sought to give counsel in difficult matters of the church, which is still the current practice.²⁹ This was continually exhibited within the writings of Rondthaler's *Memorabilia*. He addressed a variety of issues and concerns during his fifty years and here are a few to illustrate.

On September 17, 1899 Bishop Rondthaler while he was still the pastor of Home Moravian Church preached a sermon titled "Sanctification." His theology and love for Christ continually manifested itself in his carefully crafted manuscripts. He began by saying that the Moravian Church was deeply grounded in the belief of sanctification. And that this belief goes back in our history beginning with the Bohemian Brethren.

²⁷ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 346.

²⁸ Edward Rondthaler, *Moravian Daily Text Diary, 1891*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2009), 39.

²⁹ Moravian Church Southern Province, *Book of Order*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church Southern Province, 2002), 24.

He pointed out that the idea of sanctification should not be confused with someone thinking that they could achieve sinless perfection. The more sanctified a person's life becomes the more they realize their sinfulness. He preached that sanctification was a process that was attained over time. According to Bishop Rondthaler, "But just as soon as we indulge in any dream of present perfectionism the flood gate of evil is open."³⁰ The Christian life was a life journey of growth. It was a battle and we Christians are to approach our lives with the understanding we can improve our spirituality as we grow in maturity.

Bishop Rondthaler preached that sanctification was practical. The Christian who engaged in excessive emotional outbursts or unbridled physical actions was missing what sanctification was really about. He believed that if some of these same people who carried out these manifestations were given the opportunity to sacrifice something of importance, they would think your request ludicrous. The reason was because there was not a coming together between physical manifestations and ordinary duty. We, as Christians, are expected to live out our sanctification in humble practice.³¹

In 1912 Rondthaler approved of the decision that gave women the right to vote in eight U. S. states. He believed that good men and women who voted could change things for the better. He compared America to Rome before the fall with its indulgences to sin. The seventh commandment was being violated and this violation was supported by the books, moving picture shows, plays, dances and other various entertainments. The selling of liquor, carrying of concealed weapons and violent crimes demonstrated a lack of

³⁰ Edward Rondthaler, "Sanctification" *The Wachovia Moravian* vol. 7, no. 80 (October 1899) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3-4.

³¹ Rondthaler, "Sanctification" *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3-4.

respect for the sixth commandment as well.³² Rondthaler also believed that the love of money had infiltrated virtually every facet of the country's functions and it was a hindrance in our nation's ability to worship God.³³

Rondthaler was a man of kindness and sound character. He was well read in regard to national and world events. Even though the motive is unclear to us today, for some reason Rondthaler wrote a letter to President Woodrow Wilson. It was responded to by the secretary of the President in a cordial and grateful manner.³⁴

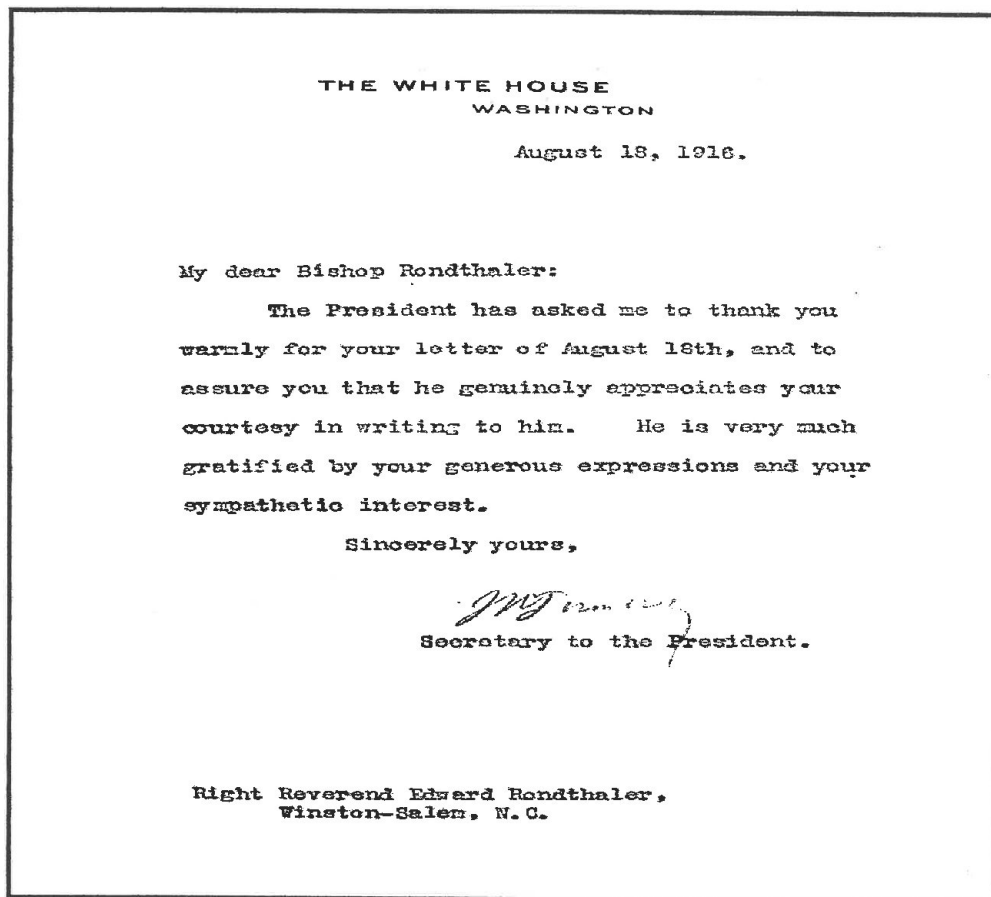


Figure 2. The Letter from the Secretary.

Source: Northern Province Archives, *Edward Rondthaler Collection, A Letter from the President*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Archives).

³² Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 302-303.

³³ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 331.

³⁴ Northern Province Archives, *Edward Rondthaler Collection, A Letter from the President*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Archives).

The Synods

Bishop Rondthaler served as a delegate to the General Synods held every ten years from 1879 through 1914 at Herrnhut, Germany.³⁵ One of the Synods that warrant noting was the year of 1899. Rondthaler writes, “The thorough acceptance of the Bible as being God’s inspired Word, and of the great doctrines of the evangelical faith, was one leading the Synod.”³⁶ Other decisions of interest from the 1889 Synod for Bishop Rondthaler concerned attention paid to missions and the governing change which brought in the four home provinces to form a Governing Board of the Unity.³⁷

Another General Synod of significance was held in 1909. Bishop Rondthaler served along with Brother John W. Fries as delegate of the Provincial Elder’s Conference and Brother John F. McCuiston and F. Walter Grabs, elected delegates of the Southern Province Synod. The Synod lasted for seven weeks, and one of the main topics of importance at this Synod was the doctrine of the church. Rondthaler writes, “The doctrine of the Church, in this profoundly agitated age, was reaffirmed on its old, evangelical, orthodox lines, and was impressed upon the theological seminaries of the Church with an earnest emphasis.”³⁸

This controversy was termed the “New Theology.” The work of Albrecht Ritschl produced a new apologetic that combined the traditional Christian faith with scientific and historical scholarship.³⁹ (For more information on the works of Ritschl see note.)⁴⁰

³⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 14, 85, 171, 263, 319.

³⁶ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 176.

³⁷ Rondthaler, “Editorial Correspondence,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 7, no. 7 (July 1899), 1. The Provinces would consist of the German, British, American North and American South.

³⁸ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 269.

³⁹ C. Daniel Crews, *Confessing Our Unity in Christ* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2000), 14-20.

⁴⁰ Albert Ritschl, *The Christian doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers Inc. 1966) 596, 598-99. Ritschl taught that a mature person needed the benefit of knowledge.

The faculty at Gnadenfeld was using the work of Ritschl and incorporating it into the teaching for the students. The issue grew into a significant problem that led to threats to discontinue foreign mission support and even shut down the seminary. The general Synod of 1909 made the decision to halt anything that was not traditionally based, referring back to the General Synods of 1879 and 1889. Rondthaler gave this statement to a British mission's magazine, "We are thankful that our evangelical Christian doctrine has been maintained in purity, and we can now all go home with courage for the future of our respective provinces."⁴¹

On December 2, 1908 Bishop Rondthaler's tenure as pastor of the pulpit he had occupied for 31 years was yielded to the Rev. J. Kenneth Pfohl.⁴² For just two and a half years after leaving his pastorate at Home Church he continued to bring the message of Christ to any audience made available to him. Here is an excerpt from an Easter sermon from Home Moravian church to that effect. The text was Mark 16:6 and the title "He is Risen." This sermon from Rondthaler emphasizes his strong leanings upon Christ and his death, burial, and resurrection.

Since the Risen Christ there are three facts that are pointed toward the Christian. The first was the "Risen Christ-Forgiven Man." We have been forgiven and it was this

The study of science and history were to help bring them to a relationship with God through Christ. Those who believed that an immediate personal relationship could be attained without the benefit of knowledge were misguided. The people that could have that immediate relationship were individuals who were brought up in the Church and given the proper knowledge; Albert Ritschl's most famous work is *The Christian doctrine of justification and reconciliation* and another noted work is *Geschichte des Pietismus*. Also there is a follow up work of Ritschl's titled *Three Essays*, which he defends his teachings; Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought From Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 391. According to Barth, "In this his abandoning of all knowledge which could not be rendered comprehensible within this framework is seen properly as the characteristic thing about his theology....We must not allow ourselves to be blinded by sight of the extensive material Ritschl drew from the Bible and the history of dogma to the fact that this, and ultimately this alone, was his chief concern."

⁴¹ C. Daniel Crews, *Confessing Our Unity in Christ* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2000), 14-20. Quoted in Moravian Missions, August 1909, 152.

⁴² Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 261.

forgiveness that creates within the Christian “an inner tone and temperament” that even a good moral unbeliever does not possess.

The second fact was the “Risen Christ-Secret Asset” that comes from knowing Christ as your Savior. Christ took on human form and allowed himself to suffer, be tempted, and struggle in this life. He placed himself in this position to be able to help us in the present as confirmed by Philippians 2:13. Christ was our helper in the daily struggles of life. He also brings together our present life with the life to come.

The third fact was the “Risen Christ-Eternal Life.” There was not room for a negative, pessimistic philosophy. The fact was that God raised Christ from the dead, we too shall be raised. Rondthaler believed that in his day people had become indifferent to the teaching of heaven and they believed that death would end all. He referred to Romans 8:11 to support the biblical fact that eternal life was promised to man because of the resurrection of Christ.

This sermon should be considered important for various reasons. It was being preached by the former pastor of Home Church, which was the mother ship to all the other Salem Congregation churches. It was preached just a year after the General Synod of 1909 where Moravian Church ecclesiology and theology was challenged. It was preached by a respected Bishop, who has the spiritual matters of the church at heart. It was preached by the President of the Provincial Elders Conference which was the elected governing body of the Southern Province. So with all these contributing factors considered and with these words that Rondthaler preached, the PEC president had

overlaid his heart with that of a bishop. He once again gave the people in the pews, and the readers of the *Wachovia Moravian* a central theological focus.⁴³

His Accomplishments

Upon the death of one of the great leaders of the Moravian Church, the Reverend C. Lewis Rights, the post of President of the Provincial Elders Conference was passed to Bishop Rondthaler.⁴⁴ Rondthaler credited Rights with “the revival of our Southern Province.” Crews and Starbuck write, “If it had not been for Christian Lewis Rights, the Southern Province would not exist today.”⁴⁵ A man of Right’s caliber would be missed, and the position of leadership as President would be handed to Rondthaler and remain for the next forty years.⁴⁶

Rondthaler served on the Provincial Elders Conference as a member or President for fifty years. During these fifty years he served, twenty-nine churches were added to the Southern Province. In 1880, three years after he arrived, the Moravian church had 2,135 members and in 1930, shortly before his death, there were 11,658.⁴⁷ Bishop Edward Rondthaler demonstrated strength and character, which provided the necessary leadership the Southern Province needed.

In 1881, while serving on Provincial Elders Conference, Rondthaler recommended the close of Salem Female Academy if it was not able to eliminate its deficit. In 1883 the school had a positive year with the desired results achieved. In June of 1884 President Theophilus Zorn resigned to become assistant principal at Nazareth

⁴³ Edward Rondthaler, “Easter Sermon,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 22, no. 211 (May 1911) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives) 1-3.

⁴⁴ C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future, Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 402.

⁴⁵ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 395.

⁴⁶ Northern Province Archives, *Record of Moravian Ministers 1898 to 1923*, (Bethlehem, PA: Northern Province Archives, 2009), 32.

⁴⁷ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 830-832.

Hall in Pennsylvania. Upon the request of the PEC Rondthaler became President of Salem Female Academy, with the help of an assistant Br. John H Clewell from Ohio.

In 1884, unbeknownst to the PEC the school had accrued a large debt. Rondthaler's leadership helped the school to pay off the debt and establish a more stabilized budget. By 1887 the school had reached its capacity with one hundred and twenty-six boarders, and Rondthaler asked to be relieved of his studies in 1888.⁴⁸ In the Memorabilia of 1892 he writes, "The Salem Female Academy is the most important enterprise of the Southern District. Its continued prosperity is a reason for devout thankfulness."⁴⁹

Rondthaler helped establish the Wachovia Moravian Newspaper for which he was twice the editor. He occupied the position as editor first from 1893 to 1904, then again from 1911 to 1931. According to Bishop George Higgins, Rondthaler served as editor mostly in name only and the actual work was performed by associate editors.⁵⁰

Rondthaler was honored by the University of North Carolina when they conferred on him the Doctor of Divinity in 1880. Then the University of North Carolina honored him again forty two years later with the Doctor of Laws Degree.⁵¹

Rondthaler received the Distinguished Community Service Award which recognized him as the outstanding citizen of the Winston-Salem community in 1930. This award was for his leadership and positive influence in the work and growth of Winston-Salem during a fifty-three year span. According to his son, Dr. Howard Rondthaler, his

⁴⁸ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future*, 440-441.

⁴⁹ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877-1927* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, 1928), 114.

⁵⁰ George Higgins, "The Wachovia Moravian Story from 1893-1970," *The Wachovia Moravian* (Winston-Salem, NC: Board of Christian Education and Evangelism, 1969-70), 9-11.

⁵¹ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 9-10.

father upon hearing the news of his award and seeing his picture in the paper, was sitting in his office with his head in his hands weeping. When asked why he was weeping by his son, he said, "Because the people have been too good to me. Have you heard the news? This I certainly have not deserved, they are too good, they are too kind."⁵²

Upon Rondthaler's death people from all arenas of life, including members of the interdenominational Winston-Salem Ministerial Association, came to pay their respects to him. An estimated 5,800 people came to Home Moravian Church to view the deceased.⁵³ Local businesses and establishments closed their shops from 3:30 to 4:00 and Salem College postponed classes at one o'clock and for the remainder of the day out of respect for the funeral. The North Carolina General Assembly also adjourned in honor of his passing.⁵⁴

In the *Memorabilia* of 1921 Rondthaler expressed concern for African Americans. There were still issues of segregation and discrimination that needed to be addressed in the country, the American south, and in his beloved Winston-Salem. Rondthaler wrote, "If each one of us will deal justly and kindly with the negro; if we whites will abolish the very word "nigger" from our lips as if it were a curse word, and if we will try to be the more just and the more kind to the negro because he is the weaker party, we shall be doing our individual part to make the African a blessing and not a drawback to city, state and nation."⁵⁵ The affection that he had for the African American people of Winston-Salem was reciprocated and demonstrated at no greater time than at his death

⁵² Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of 1928-1930*, Appendix, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, 1928), 57.

⁵³ Winston-Salem Journal, *Vast Throngs File by Bier of Rondthaler*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Winston-Salem Journal, 1931), 2-2.

⁵⁴ Mocksville Enterprise, *Fitting Honor for Bishop Rondthaler*, (Mocksville, NC: Mocksville Enterprise, 1931)

⁵⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 421.

when one local paper wrote "An earnest effort is being made to afford room for all who may desire to attend the funeral...Colored friends of the bishop will be welcomed to the services."⁵⁶

The Rondthaler-Brown Memorial was established to honor the lifelong friendship of the two men of God, Bishop Rondthaler and Dr. Brown, who together helped to change the towns of Winston and Salem for the better. Dr. Brown was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Winston-Salem for forty years and a good friend of Bishop Rondthaler:

Bishop Rondthaler lived in Salem and Dr. Brown lived in Winston. No other two men did as much as they to bring the two civic centers together into one harmonious and effective city. If they had been leaders of antagonistic camps, the amalgamation of Salem and Winston would have been delayed indefinitely. But they worked together for a larger good than mere personal prominence.⁵⁷

The friendship between Bishop Rondthaler and the Rev. Dr. Brown was one of respect for one another and a unity of purpose for the church and the community. "They saw evolve around them a new community, united as one Winston-Salem, growing to become by 1920 the largest city in the state."⁵⁸

As this writer has read the work of Bishop Edward Rondthaler he is convinced that this paper cannot do him justice. The volume of work he performed as a humble servant is astounding. He devoted time to write in his diaries, editorials, sermons, Bible studies and *Memorabilia*; he performed duties as a Pastor, Bishop, Provincial Elder member and President; he provided leadership in the Salem Congregation, Salem Academy, and the Wachovia Moravian not to mention his role as a husband and father.

⁵⁶ *Vast Throngs File by Bier of Rondthaler*, Winston-Salem Journal, 2-2, 1931. Winston-Salem, NC:

⁵⁷ "Rondthaler-Brown Memorial," Twin City Sentinel, Thursday Evening, Winston-Salem, NC: February 5, 1931.

⁵⁸ C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 534.

Epilogue

Bishop Rondthaler experienced the joys and tragedies of life. As you read his words you can feel his tenderness and love as a father and husband. He writes about the loss of his daughter:

Mama and I have had our share of bereavements in the course of our long life. We have both lost – our parents mine were taken when I was a young boy hers were called away in the course a ripe old age...but our heaviest blow of bereavement has come in the course of this March 1930 when our Alice passed away from earth.⁵⁹

Rondthaler reflects about Mary, the love of his life on her birthday in April of that same year, with this simple statement, “It is wonderful that we have been so long preserved for one another.”⁶⁰

There is a story given by the Rev. Walser Allen a Moravian pastor who from his own eyewitness account offers us a glimpse of why The Rt. Rev. Edward Rondthaler was so successful. This account was given while Rev. Allen was pastor at Kernersville Moravian Church, in Kernersville, North Carolina.

Once at a ministers’ conference he offered to go calling with any pastor in the province who would invite him. So far as I know, I was the only one who took up offer. We set a day, and I was at his house at 8:00am. We called from house to house until noon, when we had lunch at the Kernersville parsonage. He rested on the couch in the living room for thirty minutes, then we started out again. I had announced that he was coming, so everybody was expecting him. Though Kernersville was then a small congregation and we kept calling through the supper hour, we didn’t get to every home. I had also announced a service in the church at 8:00 p.m., at which he would speak, but it was 8:30 before we arrived. When we got back to Salem, Mrs. Rondthaler was standing at the front door of their house. He bounded up the steps and said: “Mary, Mary, I’ve had the greatest day of my life; I’ve made forty calls in one day!” I said “Bishop, I counted only thirty-nine.” He looked at me indignantly as he replied: “I was at your house!” He was, indeed, and that made it forty. It was one of the greatest days in my life too.

⁵⁹ Edward Rondthaler, *Moravian Daily Text Diary for March, 1930* (Winston-Salem, NC: Archives), 38-39.

⁶⁰ Edward Rondthaler, *Moravian Daily Text Diary for April 23, 1930* (Winston-Salem, NC: Archives), 65-66.

Not one home did he leave without offering a prayer. (He was then in his early eighties!).⁶¹

Bishop Rondthaler had many concerns for the church and its members, community, and the world. But, if you review his life, his work, and his theology, it can be explained in his epitaph on his grave marker which reads simply “Edward Rondthaler Episcopus Fratrum July 24 1842-January 31 1931” with his epithet that reads Romans 10:9 (KJV) “If thou shalt confess with Thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raised him from the dead. Thou shalt be saved.”

⁶¹ Walser Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler* (Bethlehem PA., Walser Allen, 1966), 41.

CHAPTER 3

THE RONDTHALER THEOLOGY

Bishop Edward Rondthaler's impact on the growth of the Moravian Church of America Southern Province was influenced by two areas—his theology and his ecclesiology. The manuscripts used for this study came from a fourteen year period of Rondthaler's life, while he was still serving as pastor of Home Moravian Church. His age would have ranged from fifty-three to sixty-six.

Rondthaler's theology is best summarized in his sermon "A Good Confession," where he states the *Augsburg Confession* was the Fourth of July of the Reformation and that the Moravian church could claim six of the twenty-eight articles from the Augsburg Confession as key doctrinal points for the Moravian church. The six articles he listed in his sermon were as follows: (1) Total Depravity, (2) Love of the Father, (3) The real Godhead and real humanity of Jesus, (4) Justification, (5) Sanctification, and (6) The Second Coming of Christ unto life or unto condemnation and the Resurrection of the Dead unto life or unto condemnation.¹

When we describe Rondthaler's ecclesiology we can begin again with "A Good Confession."² Rondthaler added an additional article to the six articles from the Augsburg Confession. He believed this article also contained essential substances of a Moravian confession. This material comes from the "General Book," which was probably a result of the dialogue from the General Synod of 1899:³

¹ Edward Rondthaler, "A Good Confession," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 8, no. 89 (July 1900) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3

² Rondthaler, "A Good Confession," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

³ Rondthaler, "A Good Confession," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3. Note: In a discussion with Dr. C. Daniel Crews, he believed in the possibility that the excerpt came from the notes on the 1899 General Synod. The Moravian Synod at that time in history was called the General Synod, which Bishop Rondthaler attended.

In conformity with the aforesaid articles of faith, Jesus Christ, our personal Saviour, in whom we have the grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, is Himself the great center of our preaching. The Word of the cross, that is the testimony of his freewill offering of Himself to become incarnate as a man, to suffer and to die, and the treasures of grace thereby obtained for us, is the sum and substance of our preaching. To proclaim the Lord's death we consider the chief calling of the Brethrens Church. We direct men unto him who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.⁴

As we look closely at this article we can read a Trinitarian theology. However, when used as a resource for the purpose of identifying articles for Bishop Rondthaler's ecclesiology it reminds us first, that Christ and his work on the cross should be the center of our preaching. It also articulates an evangelical and mission minded focus to proclaim the death burial, and resurrection of our Lord.

As described earlier in chapters one and two, Rondthaler held various important positions spanning over a fifty year period, which gave way to an abundance of opportunities to display his leadership style and his interpretation of the Moravian way of government and leadership. The space provided to adequately cover the Bishop's insight into the nature and function of the church is limited. However, in this section we will focus on the two articles mentioned above along with three recurring themes from his

The actual wording was not found since the Bishop did not provide a source, however the language and content are in similar style along with the title of General Synod for the book records, this supports the reasoning that the quote was from a Resolution of The General synod of 1899. According to Dr. Crews the Moravian church was influenced by the Augsburg Confession. However, there were at least eleven Confessions written prior to the Zinzendorf era, with the Confession of 1535 being highly important for its doctrinal points. There were several General Synods to follow with some being more significant in church theology than others, in 1775 there were four points, in 1818 there were five points, in 1857 there were six, and in 1879 there were eight. The Synod of 1879 contained these eight doctrinal points 1. The total depravity of human nature. 2. The love of God the Father. 3. The real Godhead and the humanity of Jesus. 4. The atonement, and satisfaction of Jesus Christ for us. 5. The Holy Ghost and his gracious operations. 6. The fruits of faith. 7. The fellowship of believers with one another. 8. The Second coming of the Lord in glory, and the Resurrection of the dead, unto life or unto judgment. For more information on the Moravian Confessions see Dr. C. Daniel Crews, and his book *Confessing our Unity in Christ*.

⁴ Rondthaler, "A Good Confession," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

sermons: (1) Christ the Center of our Preaching, (2) Missions, (3) The Instruction of Laity, (4) Scripture, and (5) Prayer.

Total Depravity

The first article is “total depravity.” Rondthaler taught that humanity is drawn toward sin, and that we all have personal weaknesses which tempt us to sin. If these inclinations toward sin are left unchecked, in all likelihood we will be overpowered by them. According to Rondthaler, “This crime of our fallen human nature, so dark in its character and so dreadful in its penalty, the word of God declares to have been borne for us by the Savior Jesus Christ.”¹ However, Jesus is the victory over sin and if we allow Him to work in us through the power of the Holy Spirit we will have victory.

The source of our sin is defined by many theologians as “original sin.” The *Augsburg Confession* states in article two that sin entered the world through Adam and all are redeemed by baptism and the Holy Ghost.² Rondthaler believed that infant baptism was of no value unless it led to the conversion of a child later in life. For Rondthaler however, faith was the sole ingredient for conversion, with baptism as an accompanying factor for adults.³ The term “original sin” was not found in Rondthaler’s manuscripts that were reviewed, but according to him, “The inspired story of the garden of Eden is as true for your work and struggles in this year of our Lord 1895 as it was for Adam and Eve,

¹ Edward Rondthaler, “The Last Words of Christ,” *Sermon from The Wachovia Moravian* 3, no. 26 (April 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

² Philip Melancthon, *Augsburg Confession*, Netlibrary Electronic Book, English: (Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, Netlibrary 1990), 4. The Augsburg Confession was the Confession of faith which was submitted to his Imperial Majesty Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg in the year 1530 by Philip Melancthon 1497-1560. The Confession contains twenty-eight articles, seven of which were considered as abuses of the church and were corrected.

³ Edward Rondthaler, “The Greatness of Salvation,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 4, no. 44 (October 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. The Moravian church practices the rite of adult baptism upon a confession of faith. In keeping with church practice Rondthaler would have gladly participated in this rite as would any Moravian minister.

6,000 years and more ago.”⁴ Rondthaler believed that if the wickedness of the non-believer was not held in check by the godly minded people the world would self destruct. The Christians who do not strive to restrain their minds from evil thoughts are not Christians.⁵

The Love of God

The second article is “the Love of the Father.” Rondthaler expressed that the love of God is shown by the Son, Jesus Christ. This demonstration of love is that Christ was willing in His obedience to God to give of himself, and ultimately die on the cross for our sins.⁶

According to Rondthaler, “We can never see what God is like until we follow the footsteps of his divine and yet human son through the gospel story.”⁷ He continues by stating that Jesus is “companionable,” and therefore so is God for God is incarnate through Christ. The love of God is demonstrated by Christ coming to us and His desire to be called and sought by us. Jesus was interested in the lives of the people he lived among, willing to help the people in need, and willing to listen. So is our God. Rondthaler taught that God is never sought in vain and knows every detail of our lives. He felt that trusting in our own merit for righteousness would be setting us up for disaster because God’s mercy is willing to help anyone.⁸ This belief is contrary to a deist understanding of God. Rondthaler portrays a God that is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and is

⁴ Edward Rondthaler, “Faith Developed by the Use of the Bible,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 27 (June 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

⁵ Edward Rondthaler, “Christ is Everything,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 33 (November 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

⁶ Edward Rondthaler, “The Willingness of Christ,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 7, no. 75 (May 1899) (Winston-Salem, N. C: Moravian Archives), 2.

⁷ Edward Rondthaler, “What God is Like,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 13, no. 139 (September 1904) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

⁸ Rondthaler, “What God is Like,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

willing to help all people. It was through God's great power and mercy that we are saved. Rondthaler believed in a Christ-centered theology. The more we love Christ, and think of His sacrifice, His care and His obedience, the more likely we will realize the great love of God.

God's love is also proven in the chastisement of the believer. Rondthaler preached that God is working to restore Christians who have fallen from grace by their sinful actions, and not push them away by wrath. He did believe our sinful nature is to be taken seriously however. Rondthaler used the life story of King David to illustrate this view. David had committed serious sins (adultery and murder) and he had been forgiven by God. Rondthaler believed that King David never reclaimed the prior status as King that he had known prior to those sins. This example shows that any child of God can sin and be forgiven, but it should be a warning that our sinfulness has consequences.⁹ He reminds us that even when we sin we have an advocate. Though the penalty for the sin here on earth may remain and could be a difficult burden to bear, compared to an eternity separated from Christ and the love of God, there is no comparison.¹⁰

The Real Godhead and Humanity of Christ

The third article is "the real Godhead and the real humanity of Jesus Christ." Rondthaler believed that Christian religion was more than a set of rules or a structured system of governing, even though these guidelines are necessary and have their proper function and purpose. They can never replace nor cause a diminishing attitude toward a

⁹ Edward Rondthaler, "Chastised But Not Condemned," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 5, no. 50 (April 1897) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

¹⁰ Rondthaler, "Chastised But Not Condemned," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

real and personal relationship with Christ our Savior.¹¹ Rondthaler taught that we, as a fallen creation, go to Christ for peace and satisfaction of the soul. When doubts and fears are overwhelming us in our lives, the real God and real Christ will always be there for help and comfort. When we go to Christ for that sustenance, we never come away empty. God and Christ will always nurture us.¹²

The humanity of Jesus is directly correlated to the doctrine of the Trinity, which is considered by Rondthaler to be the fundamental doctrine of the Church. According to Rondthaler, "There is one God, who is triune in person, being Father, Son and Holy Spirit, contained in the one essential, uncreated Godhead." His belief that every Christian's salvation is proof of the doctrine of the Trinity is detailed into three parts.

The first part is the foreknowledge of God, that God loved us before we were able to return that love, and because of this love, God sent Christ the Son. Secondly, the sanctification of the spirit, which is the Holy Spirit leading and assisting those who desire it's presence, helping the believer to grow in their Christian walk. The third part is to follow Christ in an obedient life using His life as our example. It is only by the shed blood on Calvary that our salvation is accomplished. He also believed that the more a person believes in the Trinity, the more they will experience God's grace and peace.¹³

Rondthaler taught that there are practical uses for the Trinity in the life of the believer. The first practical use is the gift of grace, which is salvation through the work of Christ on Calvary. The second use is the love of God, which once received in the heart; the believer is given the assurance of faithfulness from God to be there for them during

¹¹ Bishop Rondthaler, "Baccalaureate," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 4, no. 40 (June 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

¹² Rondthaler, "Baccalaureate," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2-3.

¹³ Edward Rondthaler, "Trinity Sunday," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 9, no. 99 (June 1901) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

difficult times. The third practical gift was communion with the Holy Spirit, which would enable us to be about the work that we are called to do. Rondthaler taught that amid the work to which we are called, there will be times of difficulty, times of joy, and times of wonder. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit for the believer will keep us connected to Christ.¹⁴

Justification

The fourth article is “Justification.” Rondthaler taught that justification by faith is an act of God’s grace for us. God loved us so much that Christ was sent to be the atonement for our sins. He maintained that it is a person’s responsibility to respond to this gift of mercy through faith. However, Rondthaler was concerned that people might try to place more value on their human effort towards salvation. He continually stressed that salvation is a gift and we are justified by God’s grace and not by any human effort.¹⁵ According to Bishop Rondthaler, “It is received by simply believing in the gift, opening our souls to it, saying, this gift of salvation by grace through faith will produce obedience.”¹⁶ Bishop Rondthaler never gave credence to the idea that the simple act of believing should be considered a meritorious act on the part of the person.

While Grace is an important enough topic on its own, it is placed here to help add to our discussion on justification. Rondthaler preached that we are saved by grace and it is given to us freely. It is not something earned or purchased, and is a comfort and a

¹⁴ Edward Rondthaler, “The Gifts of the Holy Trinity,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 19, no. 149 (July 1905) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3-4.

¹⁵ Edward Rondthaler, “The Greatness of Salvation,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 4, no. 44 (October 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3. According to Bishop Rondthaler, “But in the supreme matter of the soul’s salvation, those who, with all their heart, want it, are the ones who, in every case, are called and chosen. God wishes them to be saved even more that they wish it for themselves. ...The time has now come, dear friend, which is to decide whether you are to be one of the saved ones. Jesus is expressly passing before you for this very purpose.” 3.

¹⁶ Edward Rondthaler, “*The Life Principle of the Protestant Reformation*,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 6, no. 70 (December 1898) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

sustainer in times of need. He preached that Christ gave himself freely for us, and in turn we, in faith, have to give ourselves freely to Him. The gift of grace renews us in spirit and in truth for today and the future. According to Rondthaler, "Faith is like a hand, which takes hold of Christ's hand. There is a hearty wish, there is self-surrender in it."¹⁷

He also taught that justification and sanctification work in harmony with one another, but justification was immediate, whereas sanctification was a gradual process. This goes along with the systematic theology of Augustus Schultze, the President of Moravian College and Theological Seminary in 1914. According to Schultze the justification of humanity comes by the forgiveness of sin. Human beings are justified before they are sanctified because of the work of Christ.¹⁸

A person who accepts Christ by faith is justified by that faith. This faith should produce obedience that will cause a desire to grow in knowledge of godly things and a feeling toward Christ and the cross that comes by way of study and prayer, which will support your witness.¹⁹

Sanctification

Bishop Rondthaler claimed that the doctrine of sanctification is at the very heart of the Moravian church, passed from the Moravian and Bohemian brethren to their own reformation from the Catholic Church in the 15th century, and again through the renewed Moravian Church in the 18th century in Europe. Rondthaler argued that in our Standard

¹⁷ Edward Rondthaler, "Saved by Grace," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 13, no. 138 (August 1904) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

¹⁸ Augustus Schultze, *Christian Doctrine and Systematic Theology, 1914, second edition*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church Southern Province, 1979), 160. "The great obstacle to man's being restored to communion with God is unforgiven sin. That sin must first be removed before the grace of God can take possession of the heart. But how can he be justified, before he is sanctified? Simply through the imputation of the merits of Christ's work. By faith the sinner becomes so identified with the Saviour that he shares in his righteousness; he is ideally righteous, because his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:9)

¹⁹ Edward Rondthaler, "Faith Developed by the Use of the Bible," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 27 (June 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

Doctrinal Book the *Idea Fidei Fratrum*, written by Bishop Augustus Spangenberg,

“nearly one third of its 600 pages are given to the subject of sanctification and similar topics.”²⁰ Bishop Spangenberg gave this explanation:

Yet Sanctification is so intimately connected with justification, that if a man, whose sins have been forgiven him, should not follow earnestly after sanctification, but on the contrary be slothful and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, of such an one it is said, that “he is blind,” and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 2 Peter 1:8-9²¹

Rondthaler also referred to the Moravian’s “Easter Dawn Liturgy,” to support the significance of sanctification. According to Rondthaler the Liturgy read,

I believe that the Holy Ghost calleth me by the Gospel, enlighteneth me with his gifts, sanctifieth and preserveth me in the true faith; even as he calleth and enlighteneth and sanctifieth the whole Church on earth, which he keepeth by Jesus Christ, in the only true faith; in which Christian church God forgiveth me and every believer all sin daily and abundantly.²²

Rondthaler stressed the importance of not confusing sanctification with perfectionism, which is contributed in part to the Lutheran influence on Moravian theology. He taught that it was impossible to achieve perfection while here on earth in our mortal bodies, and the moment we think we have achieved perfection, we are at risk of letting our guard down to the very inclinations that could destroy us and our testimony. A Christian should strive for perfection while understanding that, however close you may think you are, you are ever still so far away.²³

²⁰ Edward Rondthaler, “Sanctification,” *The Wachovia Moravian* vol. 7, no. 80 (October 1899) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

²¹ August Spangenberg, *Idea Fidei Fratrum an Exposition of Christian Doctrine*: translated by Bishop Benjamin La Trobe, 1779 (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, The Board of Christian Education of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church, 1959), 256.

²² Rondthaler, “Sanctification,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3. The reading came from the Liturgy of 1898. *The Liturgy and Hymns of The American Province of the Unitas Fratrum or The Moravian Church*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Office, 1898), (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 13.

²³ Rondthaler, “Sanctification,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3-4. The Bishop referred to 1 John 1:8 (KJV) to support his point of view. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Rondthaler believed that sanctification is a lifetime process for every Christian. It is the continual battle between good and evil within the believer. He taught that sanctification is not an emotional experience or something that required confession. He believed that sanctification follows justification by faith and it is a life of humility and work, done in a quiet, unassuming way. It is done without any motive or effort for self glorification. He defined a life of sanctification this way, "Those are truly sanctified, and may we be numbered among them, whose light so shines amid a thousand humble, little duties, that men may see their good works and glorify their Father in Heaven."²⁴

Rondthaler believed that good Christians do not always live the life that was expected of them. He believed that Christians who did not offer themselves completely to God through the various workings of the church lacked a deliberate mindset for the Lord's work and ultimately their faith progressed very little. These individuals are not easily brought back into a fuller sense of grace in Christ, but often times our faithful God would chasten them to achieve that end. According to Rondthaler, "Wherever there is a real Christian who has grown careless and will not be waked up by the ordinary means of grace, trouble and sorrow may be looked for."²⁵

Rondthaler also spent a lot of energy preaching about the sanctification of the Christian. But he stressed time and time again a concern for walking in the way of holiness. This was not unlike Count Zinzendorf's great dislike for what he called "nominal" Christianity.²⁶ Rondthaler never left any doubt that a person was saved by grace, through faith. However, if that faith did not produce results he had no problem

²⁴ Rondthaler, "Sanctification," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 4.

²⁵ Edward Rondthaler, "Chastised But Not Condemned," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 5, no. 50 (April 1897) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

²⁶ A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf The Ecumenical Pioneer*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church of America, 1962), 105

stating that those people could be in danger of the judgment. His theology for sanctification was simple yet demanding. He applauded the ordinary man or woman who gave their life to Christ and then lived it in a quiet form of piety.

The Resurrection, Second Coming and the Judgment

The sixth article is the combination of Resurrection and the return of Christ. The resurrection is everything to Bishop Rondthaler's theology. According to him, "The fact stands in the face of friend and foe: 'He is Risen!' The question is not whether it has happened, but whether, having certainly happened we can realize all that it means for our present and everlasting welfare."²⁷ This is unlike other religions where the founder has died. For us the contrary is true, for we serve a Savior who has been raised from the dead. Christ Jesus finished the work of atonement by taking on our iniquities at Calvary and was raised for our justification. He believed the resurrection of Jesus gives the believer the confidence to place their trust in Him. Rondthaler held to the Pauline teaching that if Christ was not raised where would be our hope. Since God did raise Christ, however, we can have the same hope.²⁸ According to Rondthaler "What is our hope, joy, or crown of rejoicing? They are all to be raised in the likeness of Christ's resurrection."²⁹

For Rondthaler, the resurrection gives comfort to those who have accepted him as their Savior through faith. He understood that the power of the resurrection was transferred to believers to enable them to come through times of difficulty:

Thus by laying down his life that he might take it again, Jesus Christ has, with Shepherd kindness, covered the whole circumference of our needs whether sick or well whether living or dying . Everywhere and always he is the Shepherd leading his flock until he has brought them back into his final resurrection glory. The

²⁷ Edward Rondthaler, "He is Risen," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 27 (May 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

²⁸ Rondthaler, "He is Risen," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

²⁹ Rondthaler, "He is Risen," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

Father loves him for it; let us love, too, in the exercise of a humble faith and of a willing obedience.³⁰

Rondthaler gave little credence to the hypothesis that the disciples stole Jesus, or that the disciples nursed Jesus back to health, or that Mary Magdalene was delusional in claiming to have seen the risen Lord.³¹ The Ascension of our Lord confirms our own resurrection and place in eternity. Rondthaler believed that while we are preparing to meet our Lord, He is preparing to meet us, in order to share with us His glory.³² “All Christian service, however ill requited now, shall, in the express language of the risen Jesus, “be recompensed in the day of the resurrection of the just.”³³ He taught that the body of the believer will be like the Lord’s resurrected body, and recognizable to others just as Christ was to his followers. He believed in standing firm in the teaching of the resurrection and living one’s life through the assurance of certain immortality.³⁴

Rondthaler believed in the return of Christ. He explains that Christ was preparing a heavenly home, which He was planning to share with his believers.³⁵ He also reasons that our earthly journey, though flawed and filled with imperfections, will one day become perfection. According to Rondthaler, “It is not immediate, but gradual, a work of the Spirit within us not to be completed till the day of Christ.”³⁶ The important notes here are that Rondthaler points to a time and place that Christ will share with his church and a

³⁰ Bishop Rondthaler, “Easter Sermon,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 10, no. 109 (April 1902) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

³¹ Bishop Rondthaler, “Easter,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 4, no. 38 (April 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. Job 19:25-27; Psalm 17:15; Isaiah 26:19. 1 Corinthians 15:6.

³² Edward Rondthaler, “The Ascension,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 5, no. 52 (June 1897) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

³³ Rondthaler, “Easter,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 4.

³⁴ Rondthaler, “Easter,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

³⁵ Rondthaler, “The Ascension,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

³⁶ Edward Rondthaler, “Sanctification,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 7, no. 80 (October 1899) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 4.

reference to the day of Christ, which implies a second coming. Rondthaler references 2 Thessalonians 5:23-24 which also points to a “coming of our Lord Jesus.”³⁷

While there were no sermons found that were written in length about the judgment by Rondthaler, he offered specific statements about certain aspects of judgment, specifically hell and the necessity of being prepared for ones death.³⁸

Rondthaler preached that there is a hell, which infers his belief in accountability.

Speaking on hell Rondthaler states, “There is no tender bond of sympathy between it and Him. Hell hates what Jesus loves, and loves what Jesus hates.”³⁹ According to

Rondthaler, “There go those who have been saved out of the terrors of judgment and from the lake of fire.”⁴⁰ And finally these words, “Better a thousand sorrows and a final seat beside the river of life, than all the wealth and health and fame and power that earth can give-and the lake of fire at last. Amen”

³⁷ Edward Rondthaler, “Sanctification,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 5, no. 56 (October 1897) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3. The scripture was from 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (KJV) “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithfulness is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

³⁸ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 13, 24, 214, 252, 318.

³⁹ Edward Rondthaler, “Christ the Conquer of Sin,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 9, no. 104 (November 1901) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

⁴⁰ Edward Rondthaler, “The Faith-Look on the Crucified One,” *The Wachovia Moravian* vol. 19, no. 161 (February 1906) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RONDTHALER ECCLESIOLOGY

Christ the Center of our Preaching

The theology of the Moravian church is Christ-centered, is evident by recognizing Christ as our Chief Elder. On September 16, 1741 at a conference in London, it was decided by a ten-member Synod that the only suitable replacement for the resigning Chief Elder, Leonard Dober, could be Christ, and the decision remains today.¹ According to Daniel Crews, “For us the cross is the pivotal point of history. It is no accident that the most succinct statement of Moravian theology is ‘Christ and Him crucified remain our confession of faith!’”² The decision to recognize Christ as our Chief Elder demonstrates the importance of Christ being at the core of all we do as Moravians. Rondthaler demonstrated his support of this watershed decision by arguing that Christ should be at the center of all we do, including preaching.

Rondthaler believed that Christ should be the center of our preaching: “The scarlet thread of sacrificial blood runs through the whole Bible. If it is torn out the entire scripture fabric lies as a meaningless wreck-as a poor heap of tangled tatters.”³ For Rondthaler, the only way a Christian could correct the fallacy of a sinful conscience was to place one’s faith in the blood of the cross. If a person placed their faith there, then sensitivity in the conscience is created that may not have existed prior, and is now capable of identifying good and evil. The cross is also the only way a Christian can stand

¹ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church, The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722-1957*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, 1967), 73.

Leonhard Dober held the office of Chief Elder, but resigned his office. Various others who were in attendance were nominated, but the lot negated them. On September 16 the idea came to the group to accept Christ as the Chief Elder. Count Zinzendorf and Bishop Spangenberg were two in attendance.

² C. Daniel Crews, *This We Most Certainly Believe*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2005), 19.

³ Edward Rondthaler, “Faith in His Blood,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 13, no. 140 (October 1904) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

before the righteous judge. Rondthaler believed that contemplation of the cross and the shed blood of Christ could help in the decision to faith, and could help keep a person steadfast in the faith.⁴ This focus of Christ on the cross was not due to any fanatical or overly sensitive impulse as was the case for the Moravians in the past.⁵ It is due to a focus on the humanity of Christ and the great price He paid on our behalf to insure His position of authority in the church.

Rondthaler taught that the day would come when everyone would humble themselves before Christ and confess Him as Lord. Since this day of humble confession was inevitable, it would be a wise choice in preparation for this time, if everyone were to accept Christ as their Lord while here on earth, and let Christ be the center of their lives, whether it is their work, school or home. According to Rondthaler, "I want to recommend to you the Lord of all, as your Lord and Savior. And if he is to be that, if for you he is to be the Lord of all, he must be first in your thoughts."⁶

Rondthaler preached that Christ is as powerful today as he was in the days of his earthly ministry in helping us turn from sin. If our lives are taking a turn for the worst due

⁴ Rondthaler, "Faith in His Blood," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2-3.

⁵ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 104-105. There was a brief time in Moravian history called the "period of sifting." According to Wilhelm Bettermann in *Theologie und Sprache bei Zinzendorf*, "there was wheat in the chaff; no period in Moravian Church history has been so creative of significant ritual, customs, hymns, or liturgical elements, as was the 'time of sifting.'" The ideas and terminologies of Count Zinzendorf were eagerly accepted by others in the church. However, these ideas and terminologies, for instance, the wounds of Christ were described with so strong a sentimental language that it became offensive to many including the Count himself. It was dealt with by Zinzendorf and stability was restored. For more information concerning the "sifting period" see: Arthur J. Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart* (Bethlehem, PA: Board of Communication, 1998).

⁶ Edward Rondthaler, "Christ is Everything," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 33 (November 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. The Bishop did not reference a scripture passage to support the fact that "every knee would bow," however, the scripture references that support the Bishop's teaching come from Romans 14:11 (RSV) "for it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." Then there is Philippians 2:10 (RVS) "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

to sin, it would not be the fault of our all powerful Lord, but is due to our carelessness and over confident attitude toward our own righteousness. He believed that people can never become too relaxed or self confident in their own righteousness or the door for sin is open and can overtake them. Rondthaler taught that Christ as the Chief Elder, should never be anywhere but at the center of their lives, and by this we are free from sin.⁷

In an address to the student body of the Moravian Seminary, Rondthaler praised the Christ-centered theology taught of the Moravian Church. He mentioned that in the previous forty years, many denominations that once preached the simple message of Christ, had now turned to a different message. These pulpits rang with sermons on sociology, comparative religions, and literary notes to name a few. He commended his colleague, the current President of Moravian Seminary and College, Dr. Schultze, for his work, and credited Dr. Schultze with leading the school theologically in a positive and Christ-centered approach. According to Rondthaler, Dr. Schultze was a beacon of Christian hope for others to see because he “was steering his theological boat by the pole star—Christ and Him Crucified.” Rondthaler then charged the students and faculty to follow the motto of our church seal, “Vicit Agnus Noster: Eum Sequamur – Our Lamb has conquered; Let us Follow Him.”⁸

⁷ Edward Rondthaler, “Christ the Conquer of Sin,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 9, no. 104 (November 1901) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

⁸ Edward Rondthaler, “Address of Bishop Rondthaler,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 21, no. 182 (November 1907) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. Dr. Augustus Schultze wrote these words in his Systematic Theology “Christian Doctrine” in 1914. “By the term Mediatorial Kingdom, therefore, we understand that dominion which is the reward of the God-man for accomplishing the work of salvation. With regard to the world at large it is a kingdom of power, with regard to the present establishment of the Church it is a kingdom of grace and with regard to the future, it will be a kingdom of glory. He was a king, while on earth, but rather a king by right, than by actual rule. His coronation took place at his ascension...Accordingly, during the present Christian dispensation, Christ is our King, the Lord over all, the supreme ruler, to whom the whole earth must yield obedience. Earthly monarchs and governments possess authority only as they derive it from him, and he uses all the institutions of mankind for the advancement of his kingdom.” 142-143.

Missions

Bishop Rondthaler had a passion for spreading of the gospel to lands foreign and domestic. According to Rondthaler, “preaching the gospel to those who have never heard it was the chief request of which Christ had made to his Church.”⁹ He reminded his hearers of the Moravian mission that started in 1732, only five years after the Moravian Pentecost or revival of August 13, 1727.¹⁰ This revival resulted in the Moravian church selecting by the lot and sending our first two missionaries Leonard Dober and David Nitschman, to the West Indies. The Moravians had sent missionaries into parts of Europe and the Americas, contacting various people, in places of extreme hardship, and without the benefit of the native tongue. These missionaries were taught to tell people of the love of Christ.¹¹ According to Rondthaler, many former Moravian missionaries were sent out given a statement to proclaim all over the world in child like faith, which was “faith in the blood.”¹²

Rondthaler taught that it was the duty of the entire Moravian denomination to support these missions. He felt that, because the Moravians were smaller than other denominations, it was important that they should collectively focus on missions. He claimed that there was more than one missionary for every three hundred communicants at home, and the evangelical denominations identified us as “The Missionary Church.” According to Rondthaler, “the sun never sets on a Moravian Missionary.”¹³

⁹ Edward Rondthaler, “The Missionary Meeting Report –conducted by Bishop Rondthaler,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 1, no. 12 (February 1894) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

¹⁰ Rondthaler, “The Missionary Meeting Report” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

¹¹ Rondthaler, “The Missionary Meeting Report” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

¹² Edward Rondthaler, “Faith in His Blood,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 13, no. 140 (October 1904) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

¹³ Edward Rondthaler, “The Duty of Moravians as a Moravian Church,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 19, no. 146 (March 1905) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

There was deep concern involved for spreading the gospel. This concern regarded the deceptive tactics of Satan, which affected the church at home as well as abroad, and in ways that were not so obvious. Rondthaler believed that in the time of Thomas Paine and Voltaire there was a deliberate attack on Christ and His atoning work for salvation. However, he was convinced that Satan had changed his tragedy to a more subtle approach. Satan had convinced the ministers that their congregations had already been made aware of the atoning work of Christ and that message should be replaced with a social gospel, or popular topic of the day. While preaching about the ills of society or some other important topic were not without merit and at times even necessary, the story of Christ should never be replaced. Anywhere that Satan had convinced our church leaders that the message of the gospel had already been taught and did not need repeating, there remained a need for missions. This was not a mission to the foreign lands where the gospel has rarely if ever been heard, but to the churches in our own neighborhoods and towns.¹⁴

Rondthaler believed that Christ is a missionary Savior, and that Christ himself gave us evidence of this at the Ascension. Rondthaler pointed to the scriptures where Christ instructed His followers to go and make disciples of all peoples. The fact that Christ would choose to discuss missions at the time of His departure gives us evidence to the seriousness of the work. Rondthaler reminded his hearers of the time prior to the crucifixion where Christ gave His disciples another missionary directive. According to Rondthaler, "He believed that the obedience of His church to the missionary command would be an essential element in the completion of the Kingdom of God, and so He put it

¹⁴ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877-1927*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 403.

in our text.” The text is Matthew 24:14 (RSV) “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.” Rondthaler taught that the early church remembered the words of Christ and it is still our responsibility to do the same.¹⁵

Christ had given the Moravian church the great commission and it should be thankful for such a high calling.¹⁶ This calling was to go out and not necessarily make more Moravians or build more churches, but with the expressed purpose to increase Christ’s kingdom in heaven. This calling of Christ and go out and spread the gospel for the purpose of increasing Christ’s kingdom and not denominational membership is a concept that Count Zinzendorf taught to his missionaries.¹⁷ The primary goal of Rondthaler was no different than for Count Zinzendorf. The initiative was first and foremost to tell about Christ and his love for the world, wherever in the world. However, we will see later that Rondthaler did push for a more proactive evangelistic approach to spark growth in the Moravian Church.

Instruction of the Laity

The instruction of key people is an endeavor that should be taken seriously by the church. For Rondthaler, knowledge is critical for the advancement of the believer. He felt that when the believer stopped striving to learn more about the gospel of Christ, or either ceased to instruct it to others, the gospel lost some of its power. According to Bishop Rondthaler, “The true religion brings its people under instruction recognizing the fact that

¹⁵ Rondthaler, “The Duty of Moravians,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2. Rondthaler used Matthew 28:19 (KJV) “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Then in Acts 1:8 (KJV) “But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

¹⁶ Rondthaler, “The Duty of Moravians,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

¹⁷ A. J. Lewis, Zinzendorf *The Ecumenical Pioneer*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church of America, 1962), 95.

they have minds as well as bodies and that, having been made in God's image, they are worthy of being intellectually and morally taught."¹⁸

Bishop Rondthaler points to the view of Philip Jacob Spener as a way the church should treat the seriousness of instruction of children:

Next came the work of the learned and pious Spener, who was the founder of that warmer and more evangelical spirit which now prevails in many of the churches, where Christian knowledge is encouraged to shape itself into real experience of grace. His idea was that confirmation was as renewal of the baptismal covenant; the taking upon oneself of the promise made of the child at his baptism, and that then should be special instruction to this end, so that in an earnest and believing spirit the vow should be made. Instruction, under his idea, became what would now be called a "revival" method.¹⁹

He made note of the importance of the parents and church family to closely monitor their children between twelve and fifteen to ensure "they do not stray from the path of righteousness."²⁰ He displayed a concern for the children of his generation and the obligation of the parents and teachers to ensure the proper groundwork is given. Rondthaler felt that parents had an obligation to teach their children biblical principles and morals in the home. The church had a responsibility, but the entire biblical training of a child must not lie with the Sunday school teachers alone. The instruction should begin early in the child's life and the economic status of a family should never be used as an excuse to relinquish their responsibilities.²¹

Rondthaler taught that in every endeavor the Lord was our moral guide. He instructed his hearers to lean upon Christ and His goodness for our understanding. Rondthaler used three principles, to help support the morality of the laity in business,

¹⁸ Edward Rondthaler, "Doctrinal Instruction in the Church of Christ," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 35 (February 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

¹⁹ Rondthaler, "Doctrinal Instruction in the Church of Christ," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2-3.

²⁰ Rondthaler, "Doctrinal Instruction in the Church of Christ," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

²¹ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877-1927* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, 1928), 468.

church, or home. The first principle is “right doing,” This teaches that if we become accustomed to doing the everyday matters correctly, then when more critical and demanding issues come, we will be equipped to handle them properly because of our previous approach smaller things. The second principle is “painstaking,” which means you take your work seriously, and the third principle is to “always be thankful to God”. These principles were given by Rondthaler specifically for a Christian business, but can also be used as lasting guides for the lay leaders and parents in our churches.²²

Scripture

The scriptures are more than just a book; they are the inspired word of God, given to us in order to know more about God and Christ the Savior, (for additional information refer to Chapter 2, The Synods, 19-20). Any Christian, who seeks to know God and Christ by way of the scriptures, will find them.²³ However, the desire of Satan is to keep us from this realization.²⁴ According to Rondthaler, “There has simply been a change in the Devil’s tactics. What he has not been able to destroy outright, he is now trying to discredit and to make of as little use as possible to its reader.”²⁵

Rondthaler preached that to trust in God was to trust the word. Church membership was of no significance if the members did not trust God and the teaching of scriptures. In order for our faith and church to grow stronger, the study of scripture is a necessity. He believed that the knowledge of scripture held the truths of God and Christ

²² Edward Rondthaler, “Christianity in Business,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 9, no. 102 (September 1901) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

²³ Edward Rondthaler, “Circulation of the Bible,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 8, no. 86 (April 1900) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1. Rondthaler, *Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 269. Rondthaler demonstrated his belief that scripture is the word of God after returning home from the General Synod of 1909 in Germany. For more information Rondthaler’s belief in the authority of scripture go to Chapter 2, The Synods, 19-20.

²⁴ Rondthaler, “Circulation of the Bible,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 1.

²⁵ Rondthaler, “Circulation of the Bible,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

the Savior as we strive to grow in faith we should also strive to grow as students of the word.²⁶ This trust of scripture was recorded at the 1836 General Synod:

The Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament is and remains the only rule of our faith and life [practice]. We revere it as God's word, which He spoke to humanity in former times through the prophets, and in these last days through the Son and His prophets, to instruct people in the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We are convinced that all truths which are necessary for a person to be saved to know and believe are fully contained therein.²⁷

Rondthaler believed that reading the Bible is not enough. He felt that an adequate way to further one's knowledge is for small groups to come together and read and discuss scripture. However, to give us a greater appreciation for God's word, the Christian needed to read the Bible occasionally in its entirety. He recommended doing this by reading three chapters a day and four on Sunday. According to Rondthaler, "Bible knowledge is the first element in a living faith." He believed that when prayer and contemplation accompanied the reading, it helped the student to grow in their trust of God, which is vital for their faith.²⁸

Prayer

Along with scriptures, prayer was a foundational devotional instrument for Bishop Rondthaler. He preached that prayer should be natural to our daily lives. He also felt that when our Sunday schools, or businesses were not experiencing positive results that were natural for their area, these results should be considered warning signs that our strength was lacking, which could be found in prayer.²⁹

²⁶ Rondthaler, "Circulation of the Bible," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

²⁷ The General Synod of 1836: II, 4. Quoted in C. Daniel Crews, *Confessing Our Unity in Christ*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2000), 12.

²⁸ Edward Rondthaler, "Faith Developed by the Use of the Bible," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 27 (June 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

²⁹ Bishop Rondthaler, "The Hourly Intercession," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 21, no. 183 (December 1907) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

Rondthaler referred to the Great Awakening of 1857, the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, as one of the great revivals of our country. The Fulton Street Prayer Meeting was a revival that began and grew out of a deliberate act by laity to promote prayer among the people of this country.³⁰ The deliberate actions of laity for prayer fit into what Rondthaler believed because whether individually or corporately everything is affected by our prayer life.³¹ Communing with Christ is a vital piece of our daily walk. "It is for us to ask and then honestly walk in the path of our asking, doing our very best toward the ends for which we pray, and it is for Jesus to give all that we need in our great educational work that he may be glorified."³²

Rondthaler was a Christ-centered theologian who never forgot the Trinity. He continually preached sanctification, but still maintained we are justified by our faith. He held the resurrection as an absolute and preached the love of God through Christ the Son. However, he never allowed the powerful message of love and mercy of God to remove our responsibility to accept Christ or face eternal judgment. He believed in the scriptures as an ever giving source of knowledge, and combined with a consistent prayer life he taught that the Christian could grow closer to Christ. However, if Bishop Rondthaler's theology and ecclesiology could be defined in one sentence, it would be: Place your trust in Christ, live for His glory to the best of your ability, so the world will see Christ in you and choose likewise.

³⁰ Keith J. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 174-77.

³¹ Edward Rondthaler, "What Prayer Has Done," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 10, no. 112 (July 1902) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3. The Bishop Referenced 1 Corinthians 3:22 (KJV) "Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

³² Rondthaler, "What Prayer Has Done," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRIST-CENTERED THEOLOGY

In response to its declining membership over the past forty years, we want to focus on the time frame from 1877 to 1930, in which the Moravian Church of America Southern Province dramatically increased its membership. In chapters one and two, a biography of Bishop Edward Rondthaler described the life, credentials and style of leadership of this prominent Moravian leader. In chapters three and four, this writer explored the systematic theology and ecclesiology of Bishop Rondthaler based on sermons he preached over a 15 year period. In chapters five through seven the author will show that Rondthaler's longevity in positions of authority, combined with his Christ-centered theology led to his support for revivals. The Bishop's theology also allowed him to promote discipleship with his lay members in the Sunday school movement which led itself to spiritual renewal and increased membership.

The author will demonstrate Rondthaler's use of lay people in leadership positions within the church. These areas included pulpit supply, church organizations, and Sunday school programs, and gave the Moravian church a way to foster discipleship. The use of lay persons especially for new Sunday school programs in areas of the community that desired churches was a successful method. This method gave the people and the leadership the necessary time to determine whether or not a church could be feasible without the demanding guidelines of more permanent structures. Rondthaler's support for revivals and prayer meetings not only brought new members to the denomination, but helped to bring renewal as well. Rondthaler's Christ-centered theology influenced his belief, leadership style, and approach to ministry.

At Bishop Rondthaler's arrival, the American South and the Moravian Southern Province was left with economic ruin as a result of the Civil War. As the Province moved forward and began to rebuild, the area of Winston-Salem, North Carolina was blessed with an improved economy and a growing population.¹ Due to this some might argue it was only natural for the Moravian Church to expand. The author believes there is some truth to this as well. The three aspects of Rondthaler's ministry that will be reviewed will demonstrate why some chose the Moravian Church.

A Christ-centered theology is not a special belief that only Moravians possess. It is a theology that every Protestant denomination aspires to in their own unique way, and possibly without giving the pursuit a great deal of thought.² However, the Moravian church is known for simplicity in both theology and in matters which are not easily settled. The Moravian motto "In essentials unity; in nonessentials liberty; and in all things love" exemplifies how the Moravian Church chooses to deal with difficult and controversial topics.³ The Moravians are also Trinitarian as demonstrated by the Liturgy for the Trinity.⁴ More time and acknowledgement is given to Christ in the Moravian Church than to the sovereignty of God or to the workings of the Holy Spirit. It has been noted that Count Zinzendorf, the Patriarch of the Renewed Moravian Church was guilty of this same emphasis. However, Count Zinzendorf believed that the acknowledgement

¹ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877-1927*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1928), 31, 39-41, 49, 56-58, 66, 73, 120, 146, 158, 182, 193-94, 207-08, 218-19, 228, 238-40, 247, 280-81, 292-93, 313, 360, 372-73, 389, 396-97, 407, 425, 455, 478.

² Note: See Chapter 4, "Christ the Center of our Preaching" footnote #1 for more detail about Christ becoming our Chief Elder.

³ Edwin A. Sawyer, *All About the Moravians*, (Bethlehem, PA: Interprovincial Board of Communication, 2000), 74. Edwin Sawyer credits the Moravian motto to the Bishop John Amos Comenius.

⁴ *Moravian Book of Worship*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Communication, 1995), 100. The Liturgy for the Trinity contains five pages of responsive reading and hymns focusing the on theology of the Trinity and its importance in the Moravian Church.

of Christ as the Son of God is an acknowledgement of God the Father. His intention was never to diminish the sovereignty of God, but rather to raise it through the living Christ.⁵

According to C. Daniel Crews, Moravian Christ-centered theology goes back as far as the ancient brethren and can be verified in the *Confession of 1535*.⁶ In order to provide additional insight into what Bishop Rondthaler and his contemporaries understood as Christ-centered theology we need a brief summary of the ancient Unity that existed seventy-eight years before the *Confession of 1535*. Bishop Kenneth Pfohl asserts the history of the Moravian church can be divided into two sections; the Ancient Unity of the Brethren beginning in 1457, and the Renewed Moravian Church, beginning in 1722.⁷ Moravian theology had its beginning with John Hus (1372-1415) and evolved with many leaders of the Ancient Unity such as Gregory the Patriarch, Luke of Prague, John Augusta and John Amos Comenius.⁸ Then, in the 18th century, the church renewed itself from persecution and isolation with an established community at Herrnhut under the guidance and leadership of Count Zinzendorf.⁹

The Ancient Brethren

Beginning in 1457 the ancient unity was under the leadership of Gregory the Patriarch, nephew of the Utraquist Bishop Rokycana.¹⁰ Gregory the Patriarch worked in management for wealthy lords as well as in the Slavonic monastery, before emerging as

⁵ Authur Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, (Bethlehem, PA: Board of Communications Moravian Church of America, 1998), 88.

⁶ C. Daniel Crews, *This We Most Certainly Believe: Thoughts on Moravian Theology*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2005), 18.

⁷ J. Kenneth Pfohl, *The Moravian Idea: "Christ Is All"* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 1994), 1.

⁸ Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 49, 189, 258, 366.

⁹ Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 24.

¹⁰ For more information concerning the origination and definition of the Utraquist Church see Bibliography for Říčan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren*, 11 ff.

the dominant leader of the Brethren.¹¹ According to Craig Atwood, Gregory the Patriarch's theology was Christocentric. Gregory believed that Christians should follow Christ and His teachings even if it meant isolation from civic duties. The important element for Christians under his teaching was their walk with Christ, not their understanding of doctrine.¹² The Unity's theology was a derivative from the martyr John Hus, who believed in the salvation of the elect and placed emphasis on the Sermon of the Mount and good works. They desired a separation from the state church in order to live a more disciplined life, and believed in administering discipline that would lead to a form of moral perfection.¹³

Also, according to Dr. Atwood, the key to understanding the Unity's doctrine is to understand the difference they placed on essential, ministerial, and incidental matters. The essential matters were salvation, the work of God, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the virtues of faith, love and hope. The ministerial concerns were scripture, sacraments, and the church, which were important because they lead people to the essentials.¹⁴ The incidentals according to Dr. Crews "include, for example, the form of bread to be used at Communion and the precise organization of church administration."¹⁵ The church of the Unity, under the care of Gregory the Patriarch, lived their lives apart from the world and the government, attempting to live by the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. This meant that a person could have faith in the grace of God, but a faith that produces no

¹¹ C. Daniel Crews, *Faith, Love, Hope A History of the Unitas Fratrum*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2008), 95. Gregory knew some Latin, but lacked formal theological training.

¹² Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 158.

¹³ Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius*, 160-63.

¹⁴ Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius*, 174-75

¹⁵ C. Daniel Crews, *This We Most Certainly Believe* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2005), 15.

evidence through works is not to have any faith at all.¹⁶ Gregory the Patriarch died on September 13, 1473 and is said to have warned his predecessors to not allow the church government of the Unity to fall into the hands of the educated.¹⁷ In 1490, an attempt was made to bridge the gap between the Brethren and the government, and civic responsibility, but failed.¹⁸ However, Luke of Prague helped to bring these two ideologies to a more unified relationship.

Luke of Prague was the dominant leader and theologian of the Unity after 1494 until his death in 1528. He is credited for bringing greater unity to the brethren by marrying the former teachings of the Unity under Gregory to the current teachings of the Protestant church of his day in relation to cooperation with authorities. Luke of Prague wrote that the essentials of Christianity are two-fold on the part of God and on the part of humanity. From God's side the essentials are the grace of God, the merit of Jesus Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The human side contains faith, love, and hope, which a person is given to use for God's work.¹⁹ Luke of Prague also wrote a document in 1507 describing four different modes of Christ: personal, spiritual, powerful and sacramental.²⁰ According to Rudolf Řícaň, Luke of Prague worked to bring about cohesiveness between the Brethren who believed strongly in a person's responsibility to perform good works as

¹⁶ Crews, *This We Most Certainly Believe*, 16-18

¹⁷ Edmund De Schweinitz, *The History of the Church known as The Unitas Fratrum*, (Bethlehem, PA: The Moravian Publication Concern, 1901), 165-66.

¹⁸ Řícaň, *The History of the Unity of the Brethren*, 60-64. The Brandy's Meeting of 1490 was a Synod held at Brandys where the Brethren were to discuss the issues concerning how much they should become involved with civic matters, especially in decisions of life and death. The brethren believed that a secluded life would enable them to live closer to Jesus' teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. The original decision of Synod was to cooperate with the civic and governmental leaders, but with caution and discretion was overturned shortly thereafter.

¹⁹ Řícaň, *The History of the Unity of the Brethren*, 68, 408.

²⁰ Daniel Crews, "Luke of Prague: Theologian of the Unity," *The Hinge*, August 2005, vol. 12, no. 3 (1997), 33. Daniel Crews. Brother Lukas wrote in *O Pokolone* (on Bowing) in 1520, in 1507 Luke of Prague wrote a modification of his document which was to clear up the Brethren's distinction of essential and ministerial things in the church. This was sent to Martin Luther in 1523.

part of salvation, and those who held more to salvation by faith. This faith by works view caused many to desire the Ancient Unity's pattern of a removal from civic responsibility. Luke of Prague worked to bridge this gap between faith and good works as it relates to participating in secular and civic activities and responsibilities. He achieved this by teaching the brethren the doctrine of grace and a complete dependence on Christ the Savior, but the works of the righteous are leaned upon heavily as the evidence of a genuine faith. According to Luke, "Without his death and the merit of his grace and sharing in his righteousness, no suffering, nor self-denial, nor merit makes for the gaining of salvation."²¹

This, along with the Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther and the writing of the Augsburg Confession helped to push the Unity to form a faith statement for others to know what the Unity of the Brethren believed. This aim was addressed by the Brethren in the *Confession of 1535*. This confession came with a preface from Luther, expressing his approval.²²

The Bohemian Brethren wrote 34 confessions from 1467 to 1671, perhaps more than any other church. The most significant is the Confession of 1535, which came on the heels of the Lutheran's *Confession* at the Diet of Augsburg. It was written in Latin, presumably by one of the prominent leaders of that time, John Augusta, following the death of Luke of Prague. It has similarities with the *Augsburg Confession* and it was sent to Martin Luther in 1536. Luther did not agree with the articles on celibacy and

²¹ Rudolf Říčan, trans. C. Daniel Crews, *The History of the Unity of the Brethren*, from Luke of Prague, *The Ship*, 1493, (Winston-Salem, NC: The Moravian Church of America, 1992), 64.

²² C. Daniel Crews, *The Confession of 1535*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, 2007), <http://www.moravianarchives.org>.

justification. The two articles were then modified by the Brethren and returned to Luther, which he then published as the *Confession of 1535*.²³

In the *Confession of 1535*, Article 6, “Christ the Lord and Faith in Him,” states the basic core belief that salvation is through Christ. According to Dr. Crew’s translation, “This Sixth Article is regarded among us all as the main one by far, since it is the sum of all Christianity and piety. Therefore our people teach and expound it with all diligence and zeal and try to infuse it into all.”²⁴ The article accepts the Trinitarian formula that Christ is fully human, and fully God. It states that Christ conquered death and sin by His work on the cross and He is currently with His heavenly father awaiting the time when He will come to judge the entire world, both the living and the dead. The article teaches that our faith has to be in Christ, and that we are justified and saved by Him only, with no merit of our own. Christ also abides with us and works in us through the Spirit. The love of God is exhibited by the blood of the cross and is sufficient for our salvation. There is no other name by which one can be saved.

There is continued emphasis placed on Christ throughout the *1535 Confession* such as Article 7 “Good Works,” where the authors quote Romans 8:1, and 1 Corinthians 1:30. These references support the teaching that there is no condemnation for anyone who accepts Christ and lives by the guiding of the Spirit, and that Christ became wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption for us.²⁵ Another example in Article 8 “The Holy Catholic [i.e. Universal] Church” writes that Christ is the head of the church by His

²³ Philip Schaff, revised by David S. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Notes, Vol. I The History of Creeds* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1990), 578-79.

²⁴ C. Daniel Crews, *The Confession of 1535* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, 2007), 14.

²⁵ Crews, *The Confession of 1535*, 14. Romans 8:1 (RSV) “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 1:30 (RSV) “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

merit and not anything man has done or will do.²⁶ Then in Article 10, “The Word of God,” the writers state that Christ issues the command of the great commission, which we know is our charge to go out and make disciples of all people in the name of Christ.²⁷ These few excerpts from the four articles are evidence to the Christ-centeredness of the Unity at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

After the death of Luke of Prague, the Unity leaned more toward a Lutheran theology under the leadership of one of the Brethren’s prominent leaders John Augusta, as was demonstrated in the *1535 Confession*.²⁸ This Lutheran influence resulted in more of an emphasis placed on grace rather than works. This should not be misinterpreted to mean an avoidance of teaching a person’s responsibility to live moral upright lives. However, the influence of Luther and the doctrine of grace had a great impact on the Unity, and diminished the teaching of works.²⁹ This move placed the brethren alongside the Lutherans in Western Europe, and gave the Brethren the theological approval that they had not experienced in their past.

The last bishop of the Unity of the Brethren was John Amos Comenius (1592-1670). Bishop Comenius was known worldwide for his work in education and was also a respected scholar. However, his life was one of exile and despair due to the persecution he faced with the Thirty Years War, the Counter Reformation and the plague. He believed that Christ was the source of our redemption and a model for us to follow. He believed that Christ called the church into being, and Comenius wanted people to live

²⁶ Crews, *The Confession of 1535*, 16.

²⁷ Crews, *The Confession of 1535*, 21.

²⁸ Říčan, *The History of the Unity of the Brethren*, 125-126. Jan was born in 1500 in Prague to pious Utraquist parents. He was a pastor of the Litomysl congregation in 1532. Rican used this quote about Jan Augusta in his book. “In Bohemia as well, the most outstanding of them all grew up and worked: Brother Jan Augusta.”

²⁹ Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren*, 259 and Říčan, *The History of the Unity*, 133-136.

their lives as Christ taught them to do. This specific teaching was also taught by Comenius' forefathers, Gregory the Patriarch and Luke of Prague.³⁰ Bishop Comenius instructed preachers without churches to serve the people in any evangelical church that would be in need of their services, to keep a by partisan way about you in order to eliminate conflict and to help the people through Christ. He also desired unanimity of Christian churches through faith and love in Christ Jesus.³¹ The Unity of the Brethren under Comenius was never able to overcome the extreme persecution in order to build a viable church. However, Comenius never gave up on this dream and he prayed for the "hidden seed" of the Unity to be restored. This dream came true in the 18th century Renewed Moravian Church under the leadership of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

The Renewed Church of 1722

Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a man of piety with many talents and attributes, but none more important than his love for Christ, which drove his insatiable appetite to spread the gospel. This love for Christ helped him lead the Moravian Church in the 18th century to change the world through missions.³² The theology of Zinzendorf demonstrates an emphasis on Christ, not the reduction of God the Father. He believed that Christ is revealed as the redeemer of mankind, and this revelation only magnifies God the Father and the Holy Spirit.³³

³⁰ Craig D. Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 327, 398, 402, 374, 389, 396.

³¹ John Amos Comenius, *The Bequest of the Unity of Brethren*, trans. Matthew Spinka, (Chicago, IL: The National Union of Czechoslovak Protestants in America, 1940), 22, 29.

³² A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, (Bethlehem, PA: Board of Communications Moravian Church of America, 1962), 11-20.

³³ Nicholas L. Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion, Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746*, Translated and Edited by George W. Forell (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1973), 5, 8.

In a letter to the Brethren congregation at Herrendyk, Holland, Count Zinzendorf writes that he is a witness for Christ in the world for both the Moravian church and the Lutheran Church. Zinzendorf writes that his allegiance to both denominations is because of the Moravian's teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Zinzendorf, "Though I am and shall remain connected the Moravian Brethren who have accepted and taken to heart the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and have called me and other Brethren to the ministry in their congregations." He continued by saying, in ecumenical fashion, that he felt capable to minister to the Moravians as well as the Lutherans, since both were united by Christ.³⁴ This letter demonstrates how important a Christ-centered theology was to Zinzendorf in any matters that he was required to settle.

Count Zinzendorf gave a series of nine lectures in 1746 at Fetter Lane Chapel in London, England. The first lecture was titled, "That the prayer to the Father of Jesus Christ can be prayed by no one but children of God." Zinzendorf referred to the text from John 17:25, which he taught to mean that only those who know Christ should pray the Lord's Prayer. This demonstrated his serious allegiance to Christ. He preached that if people prayed the Lord's Prayer without a faith in Christ as Savoir, then they came under the conviction of the law. Basically, he just wanted people to accept Christ and live for Him.³⁵

³⁴ Nicholas L. Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion, Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746*, Translated and Edited by George W. Forell (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1973), XX.: As found in Levin Theodore Reichel, *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren, Commonly Called Moravians in North America, A.D. 1734-1748* (Nazareth, PA: 1888), Chap. 2, 93-94.

³⁵ Nicholas L. Zinzendorf, Lecture one titled "That the Prayer to the Father of Jesus Christ Can be Prayed by no one but Children of God" in the *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion, Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746*, Translated and Edited by George W. Forell (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, IA: 1973), 8.

In the second lecture “Concerning the Simple Meaning and the Great Idea of the Lord’s Prayer,” Count Zinzendorf teaches “single” predestination. That no one can attain salvation in Christ apart from the work of the Father God in them. Rather, there are people that are the elect that God draws to Christ. However, he also believes Christ has the power to draw people as well. Zinzendorf teaches that Christ has the power to draw people unto Him due to sacrificial work on the cross. He uses the example of the thief on the cross to demonstrate his point. The thief was not one of God’s elect as proven by his sinful life; however, Christ saved him anyway. This strong emphasis on Christ as God the Son and His eternal saving power demonstrates Zinzendorf’s strong focus on Christ.³⁶

Zinzendorf preached a sermon titled, “I believe...,” in Berlin in 1738. He spoke about the humanity and eternity of Christ and that as his Savior and only through Him can one attain eternal life. Zinzendorf writes that he believed he was not only redeemed by Christ, but protected as well. He was precise in saying that his salvation was from the Son of God, not of any meritorious work he had done. According to Zinzendorf, “But I also believe that I am nothing without Him, and that I live only because He lives. As long as He lives, I will live also.”³⁷

³⁶ Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures, Lecture two*, 14-16. “It is indeed predestination in the order of the Father, who draws the souls to the Son, who has selected souls before the foundation of the world was laid. Thus they are holy and irreproachable in the eyes of Him who acts toward them in love, in condescension, in affection as the espoused ones of His Son. This is true and eternally true, and it is confirmed in the New Testament with hundreds of arguments; many instances prove that there are souls who must be saved because the Father has drawn them; they can do nothing towards their election. But on the other hand, the Son, as sovereign Lord of all souls, does have the power to save whom He will. He is not tied to this election, and we are not to think that no more men will be saved than the first-born, or as they are frequently called in the Revelation of John, first fruits. He lives forever and is able to save evermore, and the people whom He saves do not so much come to Him through the Father as through Him to God: He carries them upon His shoulders. And he requires that all His dear hearts should rejoice over the soul who does not belong to the election of grace, but whom He has saved through his sovereign power, because it wanted to be saved, because it was in fear about itself, because its sin rose higher than its head and because for it like a burden weighing tons.”

³⁷ Zinzendorf, “I Believe....” From Berlin discourse no. 16, April 1738, trans. C. Daniel Crews, September 2005.

The final example of Zinzendorf's Christ-centered belief comes from another sermon delivered in Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1741, based on the text from 1 Timothy 3:16. Zinzendorf reveals his belief that those who have heard the Son's voice can be saved by faith. He taught that when people are drawn by Christ they should accept it in childlike faith. This faith in Christ is life changing for a person in both heart and mind. We humans should answer to no one but Christ, who has redeemed us.³⁸ According to Zinzendorf, "It is a great privilege that we can consider Jesus Christ's Father as our God."³⁹

According to J. Taylor and Kenneth G. Hamilton, Zinzendorf's theology was more Johannine than Pauline. He taught that Christ is God and often directed his prayers to Christ. He maintained that the God-man on the cross is sufficient to atone for the sins of the world. Zinzendorf displayed in his teaching a love for Christ the Savior more so than for God's sovereignty or His justification. The redeemed of this world were sinners saved by the grace of God through the saving work of Christ and His blood. He placed his significance on the regenerate to understand their sinfulness as humans and the need for a consistent communion with Christ. According to the Hamiltons, "For Moravians the love of God in Christ still appears basic, not his sovereignty or his justice; the person of the Redeemer is still central in our teaching not the attribute of the Godhead."⁴⁰

³⁸ Nicolaus Zinzendorf, *A Collection of Sermons from Zinzendorf's Pennsylvania Journey*, trans. Julie Tomberlin Weber, ed., Craig D. Atwood, (Budingem: Johann Christoph Stohr, 1746), 22-25.

³⁹ Zinzendorf, *A Collection of Sermons from Zinzendorf's Pennsylvania Journey*, 25.

⁴⁰ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church, The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722-1957*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education Moravian Church in America, 1967), 158-59. The authors J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton were father and son. The first edition was written by J. Taylor Hamilton and titled "A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, or the Unitas Fratrum, or the Unity of the Brethren, During the Eighteen and Nineteenth Centuries. The second edition was completed by his son K. G. Hamilton as list above.

After the death of Zinzendorf, Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg became the leader of the Moravian Church, and according to the Hamiltons, he was second only to Count Zinzendorf in his leadership and service to the Renewed Moravian Church.⁴¹ Bishop Spangenberg was a trained theologian and wrote a systematic theology called the *Idea Fidei Fratrum*. Within the *Idea Fidei Fratrum* he writes a typical systematic theology and offers a broad range of theological information. However, in what he writes about Christ, he gives us an idea of his focus on the Savior during and following the Zinzendorf era of the Moravian Church. The Bishop writes about the incarnation and humanity of Christ as well as His deity. He explains that Jesus did not come to earth to do his own will, but the will of the Father. The Bishop demonstrated the love of Christ by explaining that when Christ was distressed he would pray, and how Christ acknowledged the blessings given from above.⁴² These acknowledgements given by Christ were done on our behalf giving us an earthly human example to follow. According to Spangenberg, a person who hears the gospel of Christ and refuses to accept it by faith condemns themselves. The blood of Christ protects believers from the evil one and rescues them from eternal punishment, because Christ is the source of salvation.⁴³

1877-Present

Through Bishop Rondthaler's study of the history of the Moravian church, he not only believed in a Christ-centered theology, but lived and taught it as well. In chapters three and four we review a systematic theology from several of his sermons, but to demonstrate his own concept of Christ-centered theology requires some review.

⁴¹ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 134, 144, 163, 167, 172-75.

⁴² August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *Idea Fidei Fratrum an Exposition of Christian Doctrine: translated by Bishop Benjamin La Trobe, 1779* (Winston-Salem, NC: The Board of Christian Education of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church, 1959), 102-109.

⁴³ Spangenberg, *Idea Fidei Fratrum an Exposition of Christian Doctrine*, 131-132.

In his sermon titled, "What God is Like," Rondthaler preached that to know God one must study Christ and His teachings.⁴⁴ This same idea was believed and taught by Zinzendorf as well.⁴⁵ When asked by a friend what he was studying as part of his devotions, Rondthaler's response was, "the story of my Lord, of course."⁴⁶ According to Rondthaler the Christian needs to improve their knowledge of God, and the best way to do this is through Christ and the study of scriptures.

Rondthaler held to a Trinitarian teaching, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and he was specific in his preaching as not to allow any room for misinterpretation. The Moravians teach simplicity of doctrine, church history, and tradition. Rondthaler was well versed in history and theology and he relayed the biblical truth of the Trinity. However, even in the teaching of the Trinity, he never minimized God for the sake of Christ; he taught that Christ was the Son of God as a means to glorify God.⁴⁷

In one instance Rondthaler was preaching a sermon on justification in which he preached on the critical need to accept Christ. The acceptance of Christ's work on the cross contained an undergirding of love by Christ.⁴⁸ He believed in the Christian's life of sanctification, but not perfectionism. The life of a Christian should be one of continual progress. Because a Christian's testimony without any evidence of work to support that testimony proved that something was amiss in that person's faith. However, Rondthaler never taught that meritorious works were needed as a part of salvation; it was only the

⁴⁴ Rondthaler, "What God is Like," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 13, no. 139 (September 1904) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

⁴⁵ Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart*, 8. See footnote five.

⁴⁶ Walser Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Rondthaler*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church, 1966), 31.

⁴⁷ Edward Rondthaler, "Trinity Sunday," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 9, no. 99 (June 1901) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

⁴⁸ Edward Rondthaler, "Saved by Grace," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 13, no. 138 (August 1904) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

merit of Christ on Calvary. This is contrary to the Ancient Brethren who leaned on works as part of salvation, which included living out to the best of their ability the Sermon on the Mount. The Bishop held to the *Confession of 1535*, which relied on grace, which is comparable not only to Luther, but Calvin as well.⁴⁹

Rondthaler taught that the crucified and resurrected Christ was the key to our Christian doctrine. In his sermon titled “Easter Sermon,” he preached that Christ’s obedience to die and our heavenly Father raising Him from the dead are the central themes of our faith. He calls Christ the shepherd who is leading His flock and that in His obedience to God, His heavenly Father loves him all the more and so should we.⁵⁰

As a pastor himself Rondthaler believed that Christ should be the main focus of our preaching and the model for how we should live our lives. This was not to exclude historical, doctrinal, or moral issues that a Church would need to be informed of on occasion from the pulpit. However, he emphasized that if the church kept the cross at the center of its doctrine, it would remain in good stead with God. Rondthaler taught that if Christians keep Christ in their thoughts on a continual basis then they are less likely to stray from the narrow path set forth.⁵¹ The Christ-centered theology of Rondthaler is confirmed in his *Memorabilia*, from 1878:

If we shall, through faith have Jesus with us, we may travel onward without fear; if we can but recognize His hand in all our experiences, we may await them all, unknown as they now are, with cheerfulness. If they be joyous, His blessing will

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *John Calvin Institutes of Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, “The Mode of Obtaining the Grace of Christ. The Benefits it confers, and the effects resulting from it.” Book 3, Chapter 15, Sections 1-8. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 90-97.

⁵⁰ Rondthaler, “Easter Sermon,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 10, no. 109 (April 1902) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

⁵¹ Rondthaler, “Christ is Everything,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 33 (November 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

make these pleasures salutary for us; if they be grievous, His compassionate care will turn them into final good.⁵²

Rondthaler was a man who studied the life of Christ. He relied on Christ to be his guiding principle, and shepherd in life. He accepted the journey of life, whatever it may be for him as God's gift and His providence.

The influence of Rondthaler's Christ-centered theology is seen in his successor at Home Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Bishop J. Kenneth Pfohl. Pfohl held this position from 1908 to 1934 and also served with Rondthaler on the Provincial Board of Elders from 1920 to 1929.⁵³ Pfohl delivered a sermon on Sunday, August 12, 1917 in observance of the August Thirteenth Festival at Home Church titled "Christ Is All," based on the text from Colossians 3:11, "Christ is all and in all." Pfohl preached that the Moravian Church is not a creedless church, because we make Christ our creed, and that the Moravian church has no desire to add any creeds to the ones that exist now in Christendom, but rather focus on Christ as our creed as He is our essential.

Pfohl taught that the Moravians have five views of Christ. The first view is "Jesus is our Savior," The second view is "Jesus is Master and Lord" and by this the Moravian church should go to all remote and unpopular places and witness for Christ as the great commission teaches us. Thirdly, "Jesus is passion." The Moravian church from the Unitas Fratrum to the Renewed church of Zinzendorf had a passion for Christ and his work. In the fourth view, Jesus is with us through the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit gives the believer what is needed for the circumstance. Finally, Jesus is our helper, in that when we

⁵² Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1928), 7.

⁵³ C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 839, 867.

place our faith in him we are provided with peace and joy. Christ is our example to follow.⁵⁴

Rondthaler's influence is seen even today. Dr. Crews of the Moravian Archives was asked to provide the message for the 250th Anniversary Service of the Moravian Church Southern Province at Wait Chapel, Wake Forest University, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The message was titled, "What It Was, Was Jesus." Dr. Crews refers to a quote made popular by Bishop Rondthaler, "Let us do it together." He goes on to explain that this quote has a Trinitarian dimension, in that "Let us" refers to the people working together for the common good, and when you complete the phrase, "do it together," we are referring to Christ as our Chief Elder, who is with us through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

In summary, the Moravian Church, since its inception in 1457 has had Christ at the center, both in their confessions and in practice. They have never pushed aside the sovereignty of God because of the love for Christ. It did, in the earlier days of the Brethren, stress the Sermon on the Mount and proposed that works were a necessary part of salvation. However, the Moravian Church, at the time of the Reformation, became a proponent of grace for salvation, with works as verifiable testament of a person's faith. This understanding of grace instead of works has remained within the Moravian church, even today. The Zinzendorf era became even more Christ focused with the love of Christ undergirding the theology. The Moravian Church held to the Christ-centered teaching

⁵⁴ J. Kenneth Pfohl, *The Moravian Idea: "Christ Is All"* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 1994). 6-15. Note: The first view is "Jesus is our Savior" and "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, save the name of Jesus."

⁵⁵ C. Daniel Crews, *What It Was, Was Jesus* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 2003). 7.

after the death of Zinzendorf, but with a broader view of scripture under the leadership of Bishop Spangenberg. Bishop Rondthaler was a Christ-centered pastor, with a Trinitarian foundation, which led to his success.

CHAPTER 6

THE REVIVAL OF THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE

The revival of the Moravian Church Southern Province of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a direct result of the Christ-centered theology preached by pastors and taught in Bible studies and Sunday school classrooms by lay leaders. There was an increase in membership due to this revival movement, and the Southern Province can be credited for making the decision to hold these revival services. However, in reviewing the national landscape of this time period this writer will also describe the influence of some of the significant leaders of the Second and Third Awakenings on the Moravian revivals as well as the work of Bishop Rondthaler and other Moravians leaders.

The Second Awakening

The Second Awakening spanned a fifty year period beginning from 1796 to the 1850s. The Awakening came on the heels of the American Revolution and at a time when Christianity was at one of its lowest points in our history.¹ Three pieces of the Awakening will be reviewed: the Methodist movement of Francis Asbury, the camp meetings of the West, and the mass evangelism of Charles Grandison Finney.

The first piece was the Methodist movement in America. The Methodist movement originated from the Methodist Conference in England, whose prominent leader was John Wesley. Francis Asbury was one of two men appointed to come to America by the Methodist Conference in 1771. He was twenty-six when he came to America and had a heart for evangelism. With the Revolutionary war imminent in 1775, John Wesley ordered all lay preachers to return to England. All responded except Francis

¹ Garth Rosell, "The Church From the Reformation" Lesson 9, Semlink Course Outline, (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1991), 21.

Asbury. He remained and became the dominant leader of American Methodism and utilized the circuit system designed by John Wesley. Asbury's impact on Christianity in America can be measured by results. In 1780 there were 42 preachers, 8,504 members, but shortly after Asbury's death in 1820 there were 904 preachers, 104,070 white members and 22,453 black members.²

Francis Asbury was considered by many the greatest bishop in the Methodist Church in America. For fifty years he traveled 270,000 miles, preached 16,425 sermons, presided over 224 conferences and ordained 4,000 preachers. He traveled 6,000 miles annually from Maine to Georgia and westward to Ohio. Asbury illustrated the demands he was constantly under by giving this example:

These are kind spirits, who say, "You make your rides too long"; yet they will scarcely be denied when invited to their houses. Making my rides longer still: here am I, then miles out of my way to see these dear people. And now that limbs, lungs, strength, and teeth fail, I must still go my round of six thousand miles within the year.³

Asbury first came to North Carolina in 1780, and made his last pass through in 1816 visiting the state 72 times.⁴ Asbury observed the Lovefeast several times, and a Watch-night Service on his initial visit to North Carolina.⁵ During these years Asbury preached to small and large crowds of both white and black congregants.⁶ Asbury ordained approximately 86 deacons and elders in North Carolina from January 22, 1790 to October

² Keith Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing, Evangelism and Revivals in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 118-123. The circuit system of John Wesley required the ministers to constantly move from location to location. The circuit system seemed even more practical for America because of the distances between settlements.

³ Francis Asbury, *Francis Asbury in North Carolina*, Introductory Notes by Grady L.E. Carroll (Nashville, TN: Parthenon Press), 9, 14-15, 266. Francis Asbury was born in Handsworth, England on August 20/21, 1745.

⁴ Asbury, *Francis Asbury in North Carolina*, 9. Tipple in his biography could only account for 63.

⁵ Asbury, *Francis Asbury in North Carolina*, 17, 257.

⁶ Asbury, *Francis Asbury in North Carolina*, 14-15. Noted in Journal, I, 397. Asbury preached from the book of Hebrews more than any other book while in North Carolina and often preached up to two hours.

23, 1814.⁷ Asbury's impact on America as well as North Carolina had a lasting effect on the leadership and their ecumenical spirit for many years to come, which was demonstrated by the use of Methodist pastors in the revival meetings which were to follow.

The second piece is the camp meetings which originated because of a mass redistribution of people and the recognized need for evangelism. By the early 1800's over 300,000 people had moved into the northwest and thousands more into North Carolina and Virginia, a movement which came in part by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The characteristics of the western camp meetings were revivals that lasted for weeks, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was demonstrated in radical, physical manifestations called "enthusiasms." The Rev. Barton Warren Stone, who served congregations in Bourbon County, Kentucky, described a particular camp meeting in Logan County, "the people camped on the ground for several days; many people fell to the ground with groans and piercing shrieks and prayers for God's mercy, which after some time were often turned into joy and praises." The people of the western camp meetings were mostly illiterate, but some had been influenced by the churches where they previously resided in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New England. Two men stood out as significant leaders in the camp meetings.

James McGready, a Scotch Irish Presbyterian preacher, began a frontier style evangelical preaching designed to fit the atmosphere of the west. In July 1800, at Gasper River located in Logan County, Kentucky the first official camp meeting was held. These camp meetings in the west brought an ecumenical effort among the Presbyterians,

⁷ Asbury, Francis Asbury in North Carolina, 278, 273. Francis Asbury died in Fredericksburg, Virginia on March 31, 1816. In reference to Asbury's list of Deacons and Elders there was also the term used called "unspecified", but the text gives no explanation to what it meant.

Baptists, and Methodists who conducted the meetings for frontier people who lived in an environment of ruggedness and difficulty.

While McGready preached in Kentucky, Peter Cartwright traveled throughout Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, and Illinois. He was a licensed “exhorter” in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Cartwright had little education, but read constantly from his library, which consisted of a Bible, a hymnal, and the *Book of Discipline*.⁸ The Moravians would adopt some characteristics of the camp meetings such as shouting and groaning, which would cause a controversy that would have to be dealt with by their leadership. Also the use of several speakers and the protracted length of their revivals was a characteristic of the camp meetings that the Moravians used at times.

The third piece is the dominant figure of Charles Grandison Finney.⁹ He experienced a deep heartfelt conversion at age 29 from a life of indifference toward the Christian faith.¹⁰ Finney believed that revivals were not miracles that waited around for the sovereignty of God to act, but were the result of God’s people putting a deliberate well-planned action into place. If this work was not done in preparation for a revival Finney thought it irresponsible on behalf of the people, even though he believed in the sovereign power of God in everything.¹¹

⁸ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 124-141.

⁹ Garth M. Rosell and Richard A.G. Dupuis, editors, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), XIX, XX. (1792-1875). He was licensed to preach in 1823, ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1824, and in 1827 he was the pastor of the New Free Church in Oberlin, Ohio.

¹⁰ Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs* (New York, NY: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1876), 18. “It was the 10th of October, and a very pleasant day. I had gone into the woods immediately after an early breakfast; and when I returned to the village I found it was dinner time. Yet I had been wholly unconscious of the time that had passed; it appeared to me that I had been gone from the village but a short time.”

¹¹ Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 9-14.

He also taught that in order for revivals to be effective there needed to be conviction of sin.¹² Finney believed that revivals came at times when brotherly love had diminished, unity was lost, and a desire for worldly possessions controlled the mind of the people.¹³ There needed to be a preparing of the mind by thinking about God and our relationship with him and also a conscious awareness of our sins. According to Finney, “That all that praying for a new heart, was only trying to throw the responsibility of their conversion upon God; and that all efforts to do duty, while they did not give their hearts to God, were hypocritical and delusive, and no doing of duty at all.”¹⁴ The church should never expect renewal by not preparing their hearts and minds. Finney called this work “fallow ground” and this work is vital for any success to follow.¹⁵

Finney developed what he called “new measures” to help promote a more productive spirit for the revival meetings. Some of the new measures developed by Finney were that the meetings should be held when it was best for the congregation and the same minister should be used if possible. The church needed to be cognizant of the length of their revival and display a hospitable nature. The services should always have ample opportunity for prayer. The anxious seat was designed to give the penitent a place to come and be assisted with their confession and or concerns. The seat received some criticism because of its bold nature, but it performed the same results as the Methodist’s “mourners bench or the “lecture room.” This practice of coming forward in a renewal meeting was common place whether it was an anxious seat or a room.¹⁶ Finney’s influence on the Moravian Church was his strong belief in the confession of sin and

¹² Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 16-21

¹³ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 24-30.

¹⁴ Rosell and Dupuis, *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, 80.

¹⁵ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 38-50.

¹⁶ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 250-268.

preparatory prayer being a key for any successful renewal service. His belief in God's people laying the ground work beforehand and being hospitable are principles for all denominations.

The Third Awakening

The Third Great Awakening came after Finney from 1857 to 1920s.¹⁷ It followed a spiritual decline in America from 1837 to 57 due to social, political, and economic ills and an increased concern over slavery. Due to this depressed climate, the Third Great Awakening was focused on prayer and the work of the laity.¹⁸ This started with the Palmers in New York and the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting.

Phoebe Palmer was born December 18, 1807 to a Methodist family in New York. Phoebe and her husband Dr. Walter Palmer began a Tuesday prayer meeting, which was called "The Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness." These meetings focused on attendees reaching a greater level of holiness.¹⁹ The meetings allowed open prayer from laity and clergy, and it gave women equal billing. From 1837 to 1874 people from various denominations attended her parlors for worship. Phoebe and her husband were also involved in camp meetings and renewal services that focused on the teachings of a holiness lifestyle and the involvement of lay ministry, of which she did most of the preaching. She, like Finney, believed that revival could be attained if people would

¹⁷ Rosell, *"The Church From the Reformation"*, 21.

¹⁸ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 168-172.

¹⁹ Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness-Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 2, 161-177; Phoebe Palmer, ed., Richard Wheatley, "How are these meetings conducted," *The Life and Letters of Mrs Phoebe Palmer* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Company, 1984), 252-257. Phoebe Palmer, *Incidental Illustrations of the Economy of Salvation, Its Doctrine and Duties*, (Boston, MA: Henry V. Degen, 15, Cornhill, 1855), 37-42, 46-51. Palmer believed that people are saved by faith and that total perfection was not attained until they reach heaven. She separated justification and sanctification and sanctification was not of works. In her explanation on the separation of justification and sanctification, she made several references to the teaching of John Wesley. She believed that people should believe they are saved by faith, they should publicly confess their faith. They should obey the guiding of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of scripture or they would lose their salvation.

follow God's plan and prepare their hearts. According to White, Palmer represented a transition between the clergy driven renewal meetings of Finney and the lay oriented D.L. Moody.²⁰ Palmer's influence on the Moravians was the same as it was for the nation at this time, which was a quest to return to holiness and the openness to allow lay involvement within certain aspects of worship to help to further promote spiritual maturity.

In September 1856, the New York Sunday School Union began its work by urging members to invite people to the area churches. Then in July 1857, Jeremiah Lanphier, a lay person converted in 1842 at Finney's Broadway Tabernacle, was hired by the North Dutch Reformed Church for work in urban missions. Lanphier scheduled noon day prayer meetings beginning on Wednesday, September 23, 1857 at the North Dutch Church at the corner of Fulton and Williams Street. The prayer meetings grew over time and eventually moved into the John Street Methodist Church. The Fulton Street Prayer Meetings continued daily into the twentieth century.²¹ There is some question as to whether the prayer meetings of the north and west affected the American south because of the southern population being more wide spread. However, according to Candler in the Methodist Church South from 1858 to 1860 the Methodist's membership increased by 101, 422.²² This increase in membership was witnessed by the Moravians and helped to provide incentives toward similar measures. According to Rondthaler it was "the widest and the deepest which our country has ever enjoyed." He felt that the impact of this

²⁰ White, *The Beauty of Holiness-Phoebe Palmer as Theologian*, 2, 161-177; Palmer, *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer*, 252-257; Palmer, *Incidental Illustrations of the Economy of Salvation, Its Doctrine and Duties*, 37-42, 46-51.

²¹ Keith J. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 174.

²² Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 182.

awakening had impacted many Moravian seminary students and the work that resulted from it was still producing dividends for the kingdom of God some fifty years later.²³

The work of the Third Awakening continued after the Civil War with the introduction of Dwight L. Moody. Moody's revival work became paramount by combining the facilities of the industrial world with the knowhow of business within the larger cities.²⁴ According to Moody, "water runs downhill" and "the highest hills are the great cities. If we can stir them, we shall stir the whole nation."²⁵ According to McLoughlin the changes that were affecting the cities had a direct influence on the types of people who supported Moody's revivals.²⁶ Moody was the first American evangelist to use a premillennialist eschatology. He was influenced by Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Henry Moorhouse, and the latter to the extent that Moody changed the revival messages to focus on the love of God.²⁷ This important theme is illustrated by Moody in these words, "People talk of finding Christ, but it is Christ who finds them first."²⁸

In Philadelphia, Moody used an abandoned freight depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad called the Wanamaker Store, which could accommodate 13,000 people. Moody

²³ Edward Rondthaler, "Address of Bishop Rondthaler," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 21, no. 182 (November 1907) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

²⁴ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 192-193.

²⁵ William G. McLoughlin, Jr. *Modern Revivalism*, (New York, NY: Ronald Press Company, 1959): 166, quoted in William R. Moody, *D.L. Moody* (New York, NY: 1930), 249.

²⁶ McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 168. "These changes impacted the rural evangelical oriented, intellectually unsophisticated, and sentimentally insecure individuals who made up the bulk of the church goers. These were the greatest supporters."

²⁷ Stanley N. Gundry, *Love Them In* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1976), 45-46.

Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 94. The premillennialist believe that the millennium of Christ follows the return of Christ. David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelism*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press), 40. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a pastor in the Baptist denomination and is considered by many to be one of the greatest preachers of the nineteenth century. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 201-202. Henry Moorhouse was a member of the Plymouth Brethren in England and is known to have influenced Moody by preaching in Moody's church for seven nights in a row on John 3:16.

²⁸ Dwight L. Moody, *Selected Sermons by Dwight L. Moody* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1940), 71.

utilized the support of local ministers to help with these crusades.²⁹ His use of “inquiry rooms” was a tool that Moody felt necessary for leading the seeker to a relationship with Christ. He believed, like Finney, that there needed to be some initiative on behalf of the church for the lost to move toward an acceptance of Christ.³⁰ Moody was against the demonstration of excessive emotion in his services and it was witnessed that if such emotions emerged he would ask for a hymn to be sung and the attendee to be removed from the service. Then, if control could not be maintained, he would bring the meeting to a close.³¹ Moody was not without his critics, but as the *New York Times* attests, “Whatever the prejudiced may say against him, the honest minded and just will remember the amazing work of this plain man.”³²

After the death of Moody in 1889, the country continued to experience the work of other evangelists.³³ However, at the same time, the church was experiencing a conflict concerning issues such as atheism, evolutionary theory, liberalism, materialism, and secularism.³⁴ According to H. Richard Niebuhr:

The renovation of which [liberalism] spoke was not so much the restoration of health to a diseased body as the clearing out of the accumulated rubbish of traditional beliefs or customs...A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.³⁵

²⁹ William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, (New York, NY: Fleming H., Revell Company, 1900), 267.

³⁰ Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 488-490.

³¹ Gundry, *Love Them In*, 156.

³² Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 208, quoted in the *New York Times*, 3 March 1889.

³³ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 227. The evangelists that worked toward the end of the 19th century and early 20th century were Warren A. Chandler of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, Samuel Porter called the “Moody of the South” and a member of the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Reuben Torrey pastor of Moody Church and J. Wilbur Chapman. In 1895 Moody gave Chapman the title of “the greatest evangelist in the country.” The “simultaneous evangelistic campaign” would divide a city into zones and hold simultaneous meeting by different teams of evangelist.

³⁴ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 223.

³⁵ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 225, quoted in H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York, NY: 1937), 192-93.

This was the setting of the country in which the evangelist, William Ashley Sunday, would take center stage and impact millions.

Billy Sunday was converted at a Chicago Rescue Mission in 1886. During his ministry he preached in the United States to an estimated 100 million people with over a million converts.³⁶ Sunday was not formally educated, but was a man of devotion and prayer.³⁷ In the pulpit he was known for his energetic and animated style, as well as being a fashionable dresser, with an excellent memory.³⁸ Sunday's evangelistic campaigns were simplistic. The pulpit and chair occupied a plain fifteen foot platform. Sunday would give the invitation at the end of the service in order for people to come forward to receive Christ as Savior, and shake his hand.³⁹

As follow up to the campaigns the "Billy Sunday Clubs" were organized by Mrs. Helen "Nell" Sunday. These organizations were to do follow up work with young men converted or impacted by the services. One such club was formed in Charlotte, North Carolina and this membership sponsored revivals that helped to produce 6,000 converts, one of them being Billy Graham.⁴⁰

Billy Sunday came to Winston-Salem to hold a series of revival services from April until June 1925, in a tobacco warehouse. On opening night, it was standing room only, and Bishop Rondthaler gave the opening prayer. It was noted that Rondthaler without the benefit of a sound system, and at the age of 83 poured out his heart in earnest

³⁶ Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 236, quoted in McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, 293. Sunday was born on Nov. 19, 1862. Sunday was a former professional baseball player which would explain his physical ability and energetic style.

³⁷ Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 124.

³⁸ Roger A. Bruns, *Preacher, Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism*, (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 83-85.

³⁹ Bruns, *Preacher, Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism*, 161.

⁴⁰ Bruns, *Preacher, Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism*, 104, 152; Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing*, 227.

for the people and the services. Sunday remarked, in reference to Rondthaler's prayer, "that he had never before experienced anything quite like it." It was reported that hundreds gave their lives to Christ during the campaign.⁴¹ The Moravians of Winston and nearby communities experienced firsthand the evangelistic work of Sunday, along with the follow up work of the Billy Sunday Clubs. Sunday's work produced results which could not be argued, and as Pearse Pinch the pastor of a Congregational Church in Fairfield, Iowa remarked, "I didn't do it. It is for me to humble myself and thank God for his help. He is doing God's work."⁴² Undoubtedly, there were many Moravians who felt the same.

The writer has explained that the Second and Third awakenings provided influence for the revival meetings of the Southern Province. There is little doubt that the Methodist Camp Meetings along with Francis Asbury influenced the protracted meetings of the Moravians. Charles Grandison Finney gave some reason to pause with things like the "anxious seat," but his theories are still taught today, and his passion for revival is unrivaled. The Palmers and the Fulton St. Prayer Meetings are not foreign to the Moravian pietist movement, because of the lay involvement and the use of prayer. D. L. Moody was probably the most modeled evangelist for the Moravians in Rondthaler's era for two reasons. First, while pastoring in Philadelphia, Rondthaler attended the Moody evangelistic crusade. Secondly, Moody's theme was "the love of God through Christ" and that theology can be traced back to Count Zinzendorf and his Johannine theology.

⁴¹ Walser Allen, *Recollections of Bishop Edward Rondthaler*, (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Church of America, 1966), 34.

⁴² Bruns, *Preacher, Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism*, 94. As noted in Lindsay Denison, "The Rev. Billy Sunday and His War on the Devil," *American Magazine* 64 (September 190): 454-55.

Lastly, not all Moravians would have agreed with Sunday's mannerisms, delivery, or style, but he achieved results which stood on their own.

The Southern Province Revival Movement

According to Garth Rosell, the evangelical movement of the Moravians could be traced back to Continental Pietism of the eighteenth century under the leadership of Philip Jacob Spener and August Francke. This passion for holy living was carried on by Count Zinzendorf with a focus on unity and mission.⁴³

The watershed occurrence for the Moravians came on August 13, 1727 at a time of confusion and hurt among the people of Herrnhut. The answer came by the leadership of Count Zinzendorf and others coming together to bring healing to their community. This was done by personal visitation, Bible study, and a tremendous amount of prayer, all ingredients of any successful revival.⁴⁴ This led the Moravians to restored charity within their community and a heart for missions.

However, after the death of Zinzendorf, the Moravian church found itself in debt. While this was addressed, the focus on the debt placed less emphasis on church expansion. Also, the "Sifting Period" remained in the minds of Moravians and left the church hesitant toward accepting any other traditions and rituals of which they were not accustomed. The Moravian church of America was still under the supervision of Europe,

⁴³ Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 27.

⁴⁴ A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, 1962), 52-59. "An attitude of prayer overcomes the people of Herrnhut. There was a Bible study of John. Zinzendorf and fourteen others spent the entire night in prayer. There was another prayer meeting at midnight at Hutberg. Pastor Rothe led a service at Herrnhut and was overcome by the Holy Spirit as well as the congregation which continued to midnight. Rothe invited Herrnhut to attend the service at Berthelsdorf on the following Wednesday, August 13. Since it was considered by Zinzendorf as a reconciliation service he visited every house in the community in preparation for the service. He prepared forty-six questions for the girls to be confirmed who were Catharine Heintschel and Anna Friedler. The people gathered and listened as the two girls correctly answered every question, the girls spent the rest of the night in prayer and meditation." For more information concerning August 13, 1727, see Hamilton, *The Renewed Church History*, 32.ff.

with the “lot” system still being used for the majority of the important decisions. These combined factors did little to promote growth, and by default, revivals were born.⁴⁵

There are two theories of when the movement began; Bishop Rondthaler believed that the revival movement began at Friedland Moravian Church. According to Rondthaler, Pastor Christian Lewis Rights was the man appointed by God to initiate the revival movement for the Moravian Church Southern Province. Rights was a humble man with no academic education. This inaugural event occurred while Rights was serving at Friedland, from 1850 to 54. Friedland was celebrating the Festival of August 13, 1727. According to Rights, he remembered the service having no significance except that, “When I came to my address, I was suddenly and powerfully moved.” In his message, he warned his congregation to seek the Spirit’s guidance as did their ancestors at Herrnhut. Then, after the service, everyone went to their homes without any evidence of the Spirit at work. The story continues as Rondthaler recalls:

But about three o’clock in the morning there was a tap at the door of the parsonage and when I went down to open it, I found my neighbor, the miller, there. He said: ‘I don’t know what to do for my wife. All night she has been in terrible trouble about her unforgiven soul. Could you come down to the millhouse Br. Rights, and help us in the morning.

The next morning, Rights counseled the miller’s wife, and through the Holy Spirit she found her peace. According to Rights, the evidence of her renewal was spread throughout the community, and a Spirit of revival was created. When Rondthaler wrote of this account he added that he knew the miller’s wife in later years as a faithful member of the Salem congregation.⁴⁶ According to Dr. Crews and Richard Starbuck the records at

⁴⁵ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church of America, 2002), 401. See chapter 4, footnote 4 for details of the “Sifting Period.”

⁴⁶ Edward Rondthaler, “The Story of Revivals in the Southern Province” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 39, no. 8 (August 1930) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. According to Rondthaler, “We may say that we knew this good lady in her later years, as a consistent member of our own congregation in Salem.”

Friedland do not mention this occurrence, the Diary of Friedberg Moravian church shows that a revival did occur during Rev. Right's second pastorate at Friedberg, which began in 1854. In their view it is more likely to have begun on August Thirteenth 1858 at Friedberg Moravian. This revival lasted five weeks with 51 acknowledging Christ.⁴⁷

The revival movement, early on, was more prevalent in Friedberg, Macedonia, and Friedland Moravian Churches. The activities that were displayed in the services were similar in style to the Methodist movement of that time. This alternative style for the Moravian consisted mainly of shouting and groaning. While this was normal for the Methodist revivals, it was out of character for the quiet style of the Moravians. The services attracted attention and created a cause of concern within the Moravian church both in America and in Europe.

On Sunday, September 13, 1857, Rev. Rights began a series of meetings at Friedberg Moravian Church. The services lasted for three days, with at least one service a day, and had four different speakers, two of which came from the Methodist church. Then a more significant protracted meeting begun at Friedberg in 1858, and lasted for five weeks. This began with the celebration of the August 13, 1727 Festival, which included a Lovefeast, Communion, and a message. It was noted by Rights that during the partaking of the sacraments, many displayed a quiet moving of the Spirit and wept. The meetings continued and many new penitents came forward and found peace. Macedonia Moravian Church experienced a similar result where the Spirit of God was working within the church.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Crews and Starbuck, *With Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church Southern Province, 2002), 397-398.

⁴⁸ Christian Lewis Rights, *Diary of Friedberg, Hope, Muddy Creek and Macedonia*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 6-9.

The influence of Methodists in the Moravian Church was demonstrated with the preaching of some of our Methodist brothers Thomas Frye, David Weasner, and Rev. Jacob Sheeks.⁴⁹ The actual number of Methodist pastors who helped in our revival movement is not finite, and to what extent their worship style played on this period is difficult to measure. However, the influence brought by both the Moravians and the Methodists was a reciprocal situation. For example, Pastors Frye and Weasner held the Moravians in such high regard that they requested to be received into the Moravian church. They testified to the fact that they felt called to preach the gospel of Christ, but under the direction of their Methodist denomination, they spent a great deal of time traveling in order to preach. It would better serve them if they could serve a church in the Moravian denomination. Their wives felt inclined to the Moravian way as well.⁵⁰ Brother Thomas Frye was received into the Moravian Church and given the appointment to Friedland and New Philadelphia.⁵¹

However, not all Moravians were excited about the revival meetings held throughout the communities. This concern was especially directed toward the Methodist and Baptist denominations. In the Friedland Moravian Church diary from 1857, Pastor John Chapman Cooke records that the majority of the people in his church and community were more inclined to the Methodist or Baptist churches instead of the Moravian churches, and many attended the Methodist Camp meetings. He also suggests that most of the families now have someone involved in the Methodist or Baptist churches, compared to years prior when in they were predominately Moravian. Chapman

⁴⁹ *Diary of Friedberg, Hope, Muddy Creek and Macedonia, 1857* [Transcribed in full; handwriting is that of Christian Lewis Rights.] (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

⁵⁰ *Diary of Friedberg*, 6036.

⁵¹ *Diary of Friedberg*, 6043.

believed these factors caused a reduction in his church's attendance.⁵² This reallocation of Moravian members to the Methodist and Baptist churches was one of the factors that eventually led Moravians to embrace the revival movement.

The P.A.C. (Provincial Aeltesten Conference), which is now the current Provincial Elders Conference, recorded on September 8, 1858 that some of the worship services held for several days in August were loud and disorderly. The services were held at Friedberg and Macedonia under the leadership of Pastor Rights. This was considered by the PAC to be out of order for the Moravian practice of worship. The PAC scheduled a meeting with the local congregations on September 2, with the ministers and especially Rights to inform them that these practices were not in keeping with our normal practice and be discontinued without the approval of Synod and the PAC. Rev. Rights did not deny such practices were taking place, but also did not agree they were out of order. According to the PAC records, "Nevertheless, the P.A.C. hopes that following cooler reflection Br. Rights will recognize his error and will conform in future to the regulations of our church, which it is our duty to maintain."⁵³

In "The Moravian" of 1858 there was an article that discussed concerns generated around the adoption of the revival style of the Methodists as discussed in the General Synod of 1857. The rituals of worship and how they related to renewal in the life of the Moravian Church were addressed. The Synod felt it was important to keep our form of worship uniform, but also concluded that being absolutely identical throughout the world was an impossible task. The goal of any church is the promotion of the gospel and the

⁵² Kenneth Hamilton, *Record of the Moravian Church 1852-1879*, vol. 11 (Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1969), 6256-58.

⁵³ Hamilton, *Record of the Moravian Church 1852-1879*, 6041. The PAC is the older version of today's PEC (Provincial Elders Conference). Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 398-399.

edifying of its members through the Holy Spirit. The Synod wanted uniformity, but were willing to compromise to a small degree, hoping that the Moravian style would prevail. The Synod concluded it was not permissible for a congregation to deviate from its denominational rituals for the rituals of another denomination. The compromise allowed the pastor to make certain changes to the service as the Spirit led, such as an additional prayer, hymn, or scripture reading. However, the length of the service and order of the service should be an agreed upon by the congregation.⁵⁴

However, the General Synod's decision would not find all religious leaders in agreement. Jonathan Edwards, the pastor and theologian of the First Great Awakening, might have suggested to the Moravian leadership based on his experience and study that the enthusiasms of the revival meetings would not be something that can be judged the same in every case. Edwards believed that the Holy Spirit is sovereign and we should not attempt to set boundaries on this work that God has ultimately allowed.⁵⁵ Edwards taught that some new mode or method cannot be deemed unnecessary or even wrong. The Spirit could manifest itself in many ways and Scripture does not give us enough support to set too rigid a boundary when it comes to the shouting and groaning of the Moravians.

The 1865 Synod of the Southern Province voted twelve to six that the protracted meeting was not improper. They believed that if the meetings were conducted with respect to the Moravian practices, with a minimal amount of shouting, they could be accepted.⁵⁶ The Synod of the Southern Province did not have the authority to completely

⁵⁴ E. De. Schweinitz, L.F. Kampman and F.F. Hagen editors, [author ?], "Thoughts on the Synodal Results of 1857" *The Moravian*, Vol. 3 No. 37, September 10, 1858 (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 293.

⁵⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Jonathan Edwards on Revival*, "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God" (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 89-91.

⁵⁶ Daniel C. Crews and Richard Starbuck, *Courage for the Future* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, Southern Province, 2002), 400.

disregard the instruction of the General Unity Synod. However, with the 1857 General Synod granting specific dependence to individual provinces, there was some latitude in decision making. The vote of the 1865 Synod allowed the holding of protracted meetings, with the understanding they be kept under control, which freed Christian Rights and others to continue their work.⁵⁷

A letter dated January 15, 1866 from General Unity Synod to the Wachovia Provincial Aeltestten Conferenz (later called the Provincial Elders Conference), contained the decision that the shouting and groaning in the protracted meetings, is unnecessary and should be considered unacceptable for Moravian worship. According to the General Unity Synod, "Rather it must definitely go on record to the effect that such shouting or groaning in public services is completely opposed to the spirit of our Church." The Unity Synod commented that quiet revivals seem to be more productive than the ones that allowed shouting and groaning. They believed that if the leadership communicated its expectations to their attendees, then such exhibitions of emotions would not be tolerated and would diminish. The General Unity Synod also commented that enthusiasms were more prevalent with the less educated.⁵⁸

Pastor Rights is credited with being the main ingredient in the beginning of the revival movement that began in 1850's. This movement continued after the Civil War with the decision of the Synod of 1865 and continued into the Rondthaler era. So much so that in 1879, the membership in the Moravian Church Southern Province had reached two thousand members for the first time in history.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 401.

⁵⁸ Hamilton, *Records of the Moravian Church 1852-1879*, 6085. The letter was received on February 9, 1866.

⁵⁹ Crews, *Courage for the Future*, 401.

The Rondthaler Continuance

Bishop Edward Rondthaler came to the Southern Province to take on the responsibility of Salem church in 1877. It has been established that his responsibilities grew, and after the death of Pastor Rights, he became the most known figure in the province. The revivals were already taking place when Rondthaler arrived at Salem. However, his wisdom was not in beginning revivals, but understanding how to take the work of Rights and guide this endeavor to more productive heights. Rondthaler's gift was that of sustenance, moderation, and refinement that included as many people as possible in the work. During the fifty-three year period that Rondthaler worked in the Southern Province the membership increased in number by 9, 660 members.⁶⁰

Rondthaler felt that the church was in need of renewal and that renewal could only come by the Holy Spirit. Bishop Rondthaler wrote that the Holy Spirit is required if we are to be able to love the Lord as we should. He claims that the word of God was given by the Spirit and the "unction" equips us as needed at any particular time.⁶¹ Rondthaler reminds us again that the Holy Spirit is one of the three divine natures of the triune God: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a separate person, but always near and willing to comfort us.⁶²

Rondthaler believed in the coming judgment of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead. This belief in the judgment and resurrection naturally created a concern for anyone who had never made the commitment to Christ through faith. He was concerned with the people of his charge who had backslidden into a carnal lifestyle. Others he felt

⁶⁰ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 531.

⁶¹ Edward Rondthaler, "The Holy Spirit" editorial, *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 39, no. 5 (May 1930) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

⁶² Edward Rondthaler, "The Use of the Doctrine of the Trinity" editorial, *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 39, no. 1 (January 1930) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

placed too much emphasis on church membership without any real relationship with the Savior. Rondthaler was fretful with the coldness of heart of the young people and the danger of their prolonging a decision for Christ. According to Rondthaler people needed to accept the responsibility of being a part of something bigger than a local autonomy, but being a part of the larger “American evangelical church and to strive for a fuller consecration of Christian homes to our Lord and Saviour.”⁶³ He trusted that revivals could help achieve such a consecration.

Rondthaler wrote that many of the revivals were not revivals at all. Revival, he claimed, comes by a conviction of sin through the working of the Holy Spirit. Rondthaler’s emphasis on the conviction of sin is comparable to Finney’s methodology. Rondthaler documented this with his account of D.L. Moody arriving at a city and asking for the elders and sinners to come to a meeting and confess their sins. The attendees would read Psalm 51, and the excitement of penitence would prevail. At one particular meeting, Rondthaler witnessed a thousand souls saved. Rondthaler also writes about witnessing the Holy Spirit at work in a service while he was pastoring in Philadelphia, where the Spirit manifested itself visibly and invisibly in the hearts of many of the congregation.⁶⁴

⁶³ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years 1877 to 1927*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1928), 502, 439, 398, 188, 100, 99, 33, 24, 17-18, 13, 3.

⁶⁴ Edward Rondthaler, “A Pentecostal Occasion” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 39 no. 3 (March 1930) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1. And cont. in *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 39, no. 4 (April 1930), 2. Rondthaler was a young pastor in Philadelphia working with a congregation that resisted the idea of revival and any outward testimony to the fact, such as standing, or coming forward. He worked with his sermon and came to two conclusions. He prayed for guidance and the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart and told him to use the more pointed one. As he came to his conclusion he noticed that the congregation began to lay their heads on the pews in front of them, young and old alike and many of them in tears. He gave the opportunity for anyone wanting to talk with him in the Vestry, he would meet them after the service. The large room was full with inquirers.

Rondthaler placed a significant amount of importance on the Elm St. Chapel Revival held on September 11, 1886, where the Spirit of God was manifested. The meetings lasted for seven weeks followed by two weeks of prayer and instruction at Home Church. Then on November 14, the Elm St. Chapel celebrated its congregational festival with the service of Holy Communion. More than 450 people came to receive the sacrament, and 66 communicants were added to the membership. There were two significant events that stand out from the Elm St. Revival Services. The first was an interesting practice called “standing up” that came from the services purely out of necessity. Unlike the Moody evangelistic services, there was not enough available space for an inquiry room, so people were asked to stand in their seats, if pastoral assistance was requested. However, this was not adapted as a standard practice throughout the churches.⁶⁵ The second was the conversion of the Rt. Rev. J. Kenneth Pfohl, who followed Rondthaler at Home Moravian Church as pastor and served with him on the Provincial Elders Conference and as well as his successor as the conference’s President. Pfohl was baptized on November 1, 1874 by the Reverend Albert L. Oerter at Home

⁶⁵ Edward Rondthaler, *Diary and Daily Text 1886*, Saturday September 11, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 127-131.

“I noticed that the second Elm St. Chapel bell had not rung, I suddenly remembered that Br. McCuiston had gone to Macedonia, and that there was no one to conduct the meeting. So I hurried over, as fast as I could toward Elm St. Down at the Branch, it occurred to me that there had been some special spiritual interest on the previous Saturday evening, and I thought it might be well to make a call for penitents. When I reached the Chapel, I found a waiting audience which silently filled the Chapel from end to end. As I went up the aisle to the platform I felt a physical impression as of a presence in the Chapel solemn but sweet as of overshadowing wings. What the special subject of discourse was, I do not remember, but it was brief, and it was followed by an appeal. A number perhaps half a dozen instantly responded by rising...It was found impossible to dismiss the eager congregation after the first meeting, so that no separate inquirer meetings could be held, as I had been accustomed to do in Philadelphia. We therefore needed to have the inquirers rise to ascertain where they were seated in order that one of us might go down and talk with them. There the custom of “standing up” was introduced, not because of any merit attached to the act, but from the necessities of the case. The chapel being over crowded, and there being no smaller room attached to it into which these inquires could have been gathered. From this time on “standing up” became the custom. If there has been of it previously I was not then aware of the fact, nor have ever since been informed to that effect.”

Moravian, but experienced God's saving grace at the Elm St. Chapel's revival services, at the age of twelve.⁶⁶ In 1886, Bishop Rondthaler wrote these remarks in regard to the revivals of that year:

On this rainy day, as I sit comfortably at my South study window, I begin to review one of the most remarkable experiences of my life, the Elm St. Chapel Revival Season which may in a sense be regarded as the new birth of the Salem Congregation, & of the Province. It has made us to be one people in revival views; it has added both to our ministry & largely to our congregations in the increase of members. It has remade the Southern Province, though the blessing has often been marred by human failure & is, in many respects still in its infancy.⁶⁷

The Elm St. Chapel continued to hold special services as described in their 1895 series of services. The services contained beautiful music and earnest sermons, with the services ending with praise and a time for testimonies. There were recommitments as well as eight professions of faith.⁶⁸

This earnest seeking of Christ was also felt at two other Moravian churches, New Philadelphia and Macedonia, who had similar awakenings. On November 14, 1886, New Philadelphia and Macedonia also received new members bringing the total to over 100 new members in the province.⁶⁹ These special meetings continued and brought many new inquirers and increased membership. The practice of annual revival meetings had become accepted during the Rondthaler era. The average number of revival meetings from 1893 to 1894 and from 1912 to 1913 was at least sixteen per year.⁷⁰ The Northern Province had

⁶⁶ Lane Sapp, "The Patriarch of Salem," *The Life and Influence of Bishop J. Kenneth Pfohl*, (master's thesis, Moravian Theological Seminary, 1986), 2.

⁶⁷ Edward Rondthaler, *The Daily Text 1886 Diary*, 125-126.

⁶⁸ James Hall, "The Church at Home" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 2, no. 24 (February 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

⁶⁹ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia for Fifty Years*, 69.

⁷⁰ James Hall, "The Church at Home" *The Wachovia Moravian*, March 1893, vol. 1, no. 1 thru December 1893, vol. 1, no. 10; Edward Rondthaler and Kenneth Pfohl, eds., "The Church at Home" *The Wachovia Moravian*, January 1894, vol. 1, no. 11 thru December 1894, vol. 1, no. 22; Edward Rondthaler and Kenneth Pfohl, eds., "In the Church" *The Wachovia Moravian*, January 1912, vol. 23, no. 23 thru

a designated minister of evangelism, the Rev. Samuel Groenfeldt. In 1912, he was invited to come to Southern Province and hold evangelistic services in several Moravian churches.⁷¹ These facts demonstrate the consistency and acceptance of revivals in the Moravian church.

In an editorial from the *Wachovia Moravian* of 1913 Rondthaler provides insight from his experience as a pastor who had attended several revival services. Rondthaler took the same stance as Finney, Sunday, and Moody, that a revival could be held in any church and at anytime, but with little success. The author continued by saying the Old Testament teaches in 2 Kings 3:16-17 that the valleys need to be full of ditches if we expect our Lord to fill them with water. This means preparatory work is vital for a successful revival. He wrote that we should not just pray at the time of the meetings, but the congregation and pastor should be in prayer for months before.⁷²

This instruction, given by Rondthaler was demonstrated in a series of meetings held at Home Moravian Church in 1912 four years after Rondthaler gave up his pastoral responsibilities. In preparation for the services, the Board of Elders held prayer meetings in many homes of the congregation during the two weeks prior to the meetings. The lay leaders accepted the responsibility of the services to allow the pastor to visit, whoever was in need. Prayer groups were held to pray for the Holy Spirit to be manifested in the hearts of the lost. Gospel hymns were sung, new music added, and the scripture was read.

December 1912, vol. 23, no. 30; Edward Rondthaler and J. Kenneth Pfohl eds., "Reports from the Churches" *The Wachovia Moravian* 1913, vol. 24, no. 1 thru December 1913, vol. 24, no. 12 (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives).

⁷¹ Edward Rondthaler and Kenneth Pfohl, eds., "Evangelistic Service" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 23, no. 27 (September 1912) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1. The churches were Friedberg, Trinity and Fairview Moravian Churches.

⁷² Edward Rondthaler, "Revival Meetings in 1913" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 24, no. 2 (February 1913) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

The sermons were clear and understandable, with many rededications and responses.⁷³

According to Rondthaler, "The congregation seems to be in a very affectionate frame of mind."⁷⁴ The designated speaker was Rev. John Greenfield, a pastor from the Northern Province, who worked along with the pastor J. Kenneth Pfohl. Other pastors offered their assistance as well, one being Bishop Rondthaler who did bring a message and attend some of the services.⁷⁵

In contrasting style, the Friedberg services began on Sunday September 9, 1894 with a good attendance with the Pastor James E. Hall bringing the message in the morning and in the evening, and Brother David Wesley in the afternoon. The Monday services were well attended again with Bishop Rondthaler bringing the message at 11:00 A.M. and Brother Frank Brunert of Staten Island in the afternoon. Pastor Hall delivered the evening message and Brother Charles Crouch provided some assistance. The Tuesday services were considered to be very spiritual with a time of testimonies in the morning by Crouch and the pastor conducted the afternoon service. That evening Crouch brought the message. On Wednesday the services were noted to be interesting. Then in the evening the message was provided by Brother William Spaugh. The Thursday and Friday services were in the evening and were preached by Pastor Hall. Also on Thursday seven festival visits were made. The services were considered to be spiritually edifying and five persons were converted to Christ.

The series of services at Friedberg were formatted differently than that of Home church with more services for the first four days and the use of more speakers during the

⁷³ Edward Rondthaler, "Special Evangelical Services at the Home Church" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 23, no. 22 (April 1912) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 5.

⁷⁴ Edward Rondthaler, *Diary of 1912*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 39

⁷⁵ Rondthaler, "Special Evangelical Services at the Home Church" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 23, no. 22 (April 1912) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 5.

services, which gave the services a more Camp Meeting style, while Home church seemed more geared toward the one service and all preparatory work driven to support that one service. Rondthaler preached at both services, which showed his support of these services and how he as the leader of the Province was also keeping his hand on the pulse of the people of his province.⁷⁶

Rondthaler was also a leader of revival within the community. In 1888 Rondthaler records that there were evangelistic services held at the Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church in Winston, the speaker the Rev. R. G. Pearson, which many sister churches attended. Rondthaler described the two and a half hour long services as grounded in scripture and filled with the Holy Spirit.⁷⁷ Then in 1896 the Wachovia Moravian records that Calvary Moravian Chapel received new members from the fruits of a revival held in Winston-Salem. There is no mention of Rondthaler having part in this particular service; however the openness for a spirit of ecumenicalism for revival proved valuable in the community. Lastly, in 1912 Rondthaler recorded that he assisted Dr. Craft's Nat[ional] Reform service held at the First Presbyterian church.⁷⁸ Rondthaler was aware of the greater challenge to spread the gospel and his ecumenical spirit provided an example toward openness to work with other denominations which was invaluable.

⁷⁶ James E. Hall, *Friedberg Diary, 1894*, transcribed by Grace S. Robinson, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 13. The pastor for Friedberg was James E. Hall. The text he preached from on Sunday morning was Acts 9:6 "Lord what thou wilt have me to do." And in the evening from Proverbs 8:17 "those that seek me early shall find me." On Tuesday it is noted that the services were of a spiritual nature, however, the author does not elaborate on what happened. On Wednesday it is noted that the services were of an interesting nature, again with no details. On Thursday and Friday seven Festival visits were made. This can be assumed were to people who had made confessions or who had requested a pastoral visit. See Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 862.

⁷⁷ Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 151.

⁷⁸ Rondthaler, *Diary of March, 1912*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 38. Rondthaler used the abbreviation "Nat" in his Diary writing, which was determined to be translated "National."

The current Moravian Church Southern Province does not embrace the revival meetings of Rondthaler and Rights and the meetings would have to be considered the exception rather than the norm. This is due to many mainline churches of the twentieth century moving away from revivals for social acceptance. According to Hatch, "Mainstream Protestants quickly adjusted to the spirit of the new age. Taking cues from academics and other professionals they increasingly defined leadership as an academic or bureaucratic function."⁷⁹ These traits adapted by the mainline churches were not as conducive to revival and contributed to its minimization. That is not to say there are not services to promote renewal. The Day of Prayer services that introduce the season of Lent, along with the Passion Week services are especially useful in renewal. The Liturgical year of the Moravian Church which focuses on the Trinity, Pentecost, Evangelism and Missions, are all avenues that provide congregations opportunities for renewal.

The revival meetings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were an invention of other denominations which the Southern Province saw as a proven means to grow our declining congregations. These revival meetings in the Moravian church originated with Rights and were carried through by Rondthaler. These revival results were brought about by the workings of the Holy Spirit in response to the work of praying people. The meetings originated with a Methodist style camp meeting. Then these services were modified over time to a more acceptable Moravian style, but still maintained the allowances of some form of manifestations. To illustrate this quietist style of worship we look to Rondthaler's diary entry after witnessing a meeting, "After supper drove out to

⁷⁹ Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1989), 213-14.

Pleasant Fork where I preached to a large audience in Brother Hall's series of meetings. Very attentive people." ⁸⁰

The work was genuine and heartfelt and was carried out to bring people to the Moravian church just like its counterpart the Methodists. As history informs us, up to the mid-nineteenth century the Moravians were more interested in bringing people to Christ through missions rather than through evangelism and church planting.⁸¹ However, as the Moravian church became smaller in membership, the Methodists and Baptists continued to grow and this growth forced the Moravians to look outside its normal practices. This was done, and revivals were initiated, and membership increased.

⁸⁰ Edward Rondthaler, *Diary of 1895*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 122.

⁸¹ A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church in America, 1962), 13-15, 95-110.

CHAPTER 7

DISCIPLESHIP

Rondthaler taught discipleship through his daily walk, by recognizing the gifted people that were in his charge, and using the laity to preach the word to people who did not have a means to receive it. He changed the attitude toward evangelism to a more proactive approach by seeking out those in need of the gospel and taking the church to them especially in rural settings. He reminded people of their responsibility to foreign missions because he understood that a church has no choice when it comes to the promotion of the gospel. He promoted home missions through the Sunday school program, with the use of talented personal. More importantly he kept the spirit of God in the forefront of his work, with Christ as leader and guide.

Rondthaler believed as an evangelical in the classical sense of that term, the gospel needed to be taken to the world through the work of Christian men and women. He maintained a passion for the salvation of the lost and sought to grow the Moravian church and the church universal. He also carried the responsibility, as a leader in the Southern Province, of creating a Moravian province with enough resources to sustain itself. His motive to grow the church was salvific, and not to increase membership. If church membership exposed people to God's word, then that alone would be worth the effort, but success came by true conversion and a sustained life for Christ.

According to Rondthaler, the Moravian church needed to be proactive in its evangelistic approach. He taught that the gospel of Christ must go out to where there was an identified need. This principle is in line with Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19 which have already been pointed out in chapter 4, on missions. In the ordination sermon written for

Rev. Douglas L. Rights in 1916, Rondthaler used the text from Matthew 20:28, (KJV) “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” This text supports what he called “the iron rule of the church,” which means that the church’s first priority should be to help those in need.¹ In this sermon, he taught that maintaining the outward appearance of the church was important because it is the house of God, but so is the service to the less fortunate. The church needs to be a part of the community and to build relationships with people from all social settings and backgrounds. He continued by saying that churches should seek to be like Christ by saving and serving both the rich and poor.² This sermon was not a promotion of a social gospel, where the focus is primarily on correcting the ills of society, but one that demonstrated the characteristics of Christ using the Gospels as a guide. The way to begin to build the relationships within these communities was to meet the spiritual need for those without pastors. This dilemma was met by the work of the lay preachers.

Lay Preachers

One of the Provinces’ contributing factors to spread the gospel and discipleship was the use of lay pastors to meet the shortage of pastors in rural congregations. In 1881, there was a shortage in three rural congregations: Friedberg, Macedonia and Hope. Pastor James E. Hall fulfilled these pastoral duties until he was given a call to Friedberg as their full time pastor in October, 1882. The PEC utilized the work of lay preachers with such men as Samuel Woosley in 1889, Emanuel Fishel in 1880, and Ephraim Wiesner in

¹ Edward Rondthaler, “Ordination of Mr. D.L. Rights,” *Twin-City Sentinel*, October 9, 1916. This sermon reference was provided by Rev. John Rights the grandson of Mr. D. L. Rights.

² Rondthaler, “Ordination of Mr. D.L. Rights, *Twin-City Sentinel*.

1884.³ These men were given certificates called “Licensed Preacher of the Gospel” which were good for one year. The service that these men provided to the churches was invaluable because it brought the word of God to people on a monthly basis, and it gave people some promise for a future.

These actions initiated by the PEC were not demonstrative of their feelings concerning education, but quite the contrary. The Synod of 1890 still desired their pastors to acquire a formal seminary education. However, the Province consisting of 20 congregations and six ordained pastors had to meet the pastoral needs, so allowances were approved for the benefit of its people.⁴ The utilization of lay leadership continued with the work of Brother Clarence E. Crist at outlying areas such as Fulp and Providence Moravian Churches, and with the work of the lay women who assisted Rev. F. W. Grabs with his mission work in the mountains of Virginia.⁵ Rondthaler supported the use of lay pastors but still expressed his support for theological training for his pastors. He felt that pastors who had been formally trained acquired the necessary skills and study habits that enabled them to prepare properly, and were less likely to succumb to what he described as “the loud and fanatical sermons of the unprepared.”⁶

Missions

The work of missions came in two parts, foreign and domestic. The history of the Moravian Church is steeped in missions, which can be traced back to the August 13, 1727 Pentecost at Herrnhut. There the manifestation of the Holy Spirit led to sending its

³ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 427-428. The PEC approved the ordination of lay preacher Samuel Woosley on January 3, 1889 as the appointed pastor for the smaller congregations.

⁴ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 427-428.

⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 304.

⁶ Edward Rondthaler, “An Educated Ministry” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 31 (September 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

first missionaries to the West Indies.⁷ The need for work in home missions ensued with the plea for foreign missions. The dichotomy between the two mission endeavors was predominantly driven by financial concerns. The desire to increase the kingdom of God at home was just as important as it was to increase it abroad. However, the concern for work at home received more attention because, without success at home, there could be no foreign assistance.

The Home Missionary Society of 1877 was witness to the positive labors of Brothers James Hall and Bryon Spauld in various places of worship in the Province. Due to their efforts, the Province approved the hiring of an additional missionary. The missionary's purpose was to seek out opportunities where new congregations could be organized.⁸ The Synod of 1890 gave the church a charge to proactively go out and seek places where there were no residing Moravian churches and investigate the possibility of beginning meetings with people in those communities.

This was a different method of evangelism than was taught by Zinzendorf. The missionaries under Zinzendorf were given a charge to meet people where they were in social status and location, without the intended purpose of planning new places of Moravian worship. Their primary goal was to take the message of Christ to the world and build up the church universal.⁹ The American Moravian missionaries of 18th century, under the leadership of Bishop Spangenberg, worked to promote the kingdom of God with Native Americans and other European settlers with this same mind set. However, in

⁷ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, 1967), 34-50.

⁸ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 4. The places of worship were the Colored Church, and places of worship in the town of Winston, and in community of East Salem.

⁹ A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Church of America, 1962), 78-97.

America, the building of communities evolved as a necessity to survive and as a means to continue to offer assistance to missions. This building of community quite naturally brought about the emergence of churches.¹⁰

In contrast, the decision of the 1890 Synod was purely of an evangelical nature, for it sought to expand the kingdom of God by building churches, which would hopefully bring a positive impact to communities. Rondthaler was a leader in the implementation of this decision. To give an example of the success of one such occurrence we turn to the article “The Sunday School” by James T. Lineback in 1895:

Do you ask, is a church wanted at Union Cross? We answer, - there are not many persons there who are anxious for it. Is a church needed there? We give the following facts: Until Bro. Woosley commenced preaching at the place, something over a year ago, no sermon had been heard in this immediate neighborhood except one funeral, in 40 years. In a class of eight boys in the Sunday school, there wasn't one who could tell or knew anything about the birth of the Saviour, nor how longingly and lovingly He drew the children to himself when he went about doing good.¹¹

The work was indeed successful and as of 2008 the Union Cross Moravian Church has a total membership of 398.¹²

The Province was not strong in support of foreign missions until the beginning of the twentieth century when Rondthaler began leading the way. Articles appeared in *The Wachovia Moravian* on a continuum to keep people aware of the work of foreign missionaries, but it is difficult to quantify how much these articles impacted the people's willingness to financially support the effort. Rondthaler met with the other PEC presidents in 1902 at Berthelsdorf, Germany to work on ways to increase support for

¹⁰ Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 132-145.

¹¹ James T. Lineback, “The Sunday School” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 25 (March 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3

¹² Moravian Church in North America, 2010, *Directory of Statistics*, (Bethlehem, PA: The Interprovincial Board of Communication Moravian Church of America, 2010), 103.

foreign missions. He was also a part of the PEC decision to form the Foreign Mission Committee to keep the church informed of the ongoing mission work and needs.¹³ In an article from the February, 1903 *Wachovia Moravian* Rondthaler's son, Howard provided to the province an itemized list of spending for missions. For every dollar given, eighty one cents went to the mission field, thirteen cents to the aged missionaries, four cents to the training of missionaries and two cents for postage. Also in 1904, Rondthaler wrote in his *Memorabilia* that funding for foreign missions was in such a deteriorated state that in order for it to be revitalized, missions needed to be first in the minds and hearts of the province.¹⁴ The need for missions was reiterated with visits from missionaries. On his way to Alaska, Bishop John Taylor Hamilton, the representative of the Unity's Mission Board, remained in Salem for a month to bring encouragement and information concerning the work in foreign missions. Rondthaler wrote "we trust that permanent good has thus been accomplished."¹⁵

Rondthaler's Theory

Bishop Rondthaler believed that if religion was to be true then there needed to be instruction. According to Rondthaler, people are made in God's image and should be taught God's word, both intellectually and morally. Rondthaler believed that people's behavior was a result of their feelings but the lack of biblical knowledge was the greater

¹³ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 469-71. Edward Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1928), 201. At the request of our Provincial Elder's Conference, which is one of the five constituent elements of the Unity Board, Bishop Rondthaler returned [sic] to Berthelsdorf, Germany. Here the six representatives of the Unity, two from the United States, one from Great Britain, one from Germany and two from the Mission Board, carefully considered the affairs of the Church. There was little importance to transact with regard to the Home Churches in the several Provinces, but a great deal with regard to our Missions among the heathen. In the face of an annual deficit of from \$20,000 to \$25,000 a close examination was made into every mission field; every possible retrenchment was agreed upon, and measures were considered for an increase of interest in the work and of contributions to its support. The great courtesies shown to the foreign representative brought into clear expression the unity-feeling prevailing among our Brethren across the seas.

¹⁴ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 220.

¹⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 231.

reason for their behavior. He believed that knowledge enabled people to be obedient to the teaching of scripture. On to the contrary, people who lack sound biblical instructions tend to improvise with their own ideologies, which created misunderstandings.

Rondthaler believed the ideal way to study scripture was “line by line” and “precept by precept.”¹⁶

Rondthaler believed that growing in Christian understanding came in small, continuous increments. He taught that children should be trained in their early years. He understood that training a child at an early age would be easier than waiting until after they are older when habits and personalities have already been formed. He believed that young people were grounded by the teaching of scripture, and older adults that received instruction as a child, would continue to benefit from their foundational training if they placed their instruction under constant examination.¹⁷

The Youth

The instruction of children was addressed by the Moravian church’s involvement with the Christian Endeavor Society. This society was a national organization that focused on the development of young people. The Rev. A. D. Thaeler was a Moravian pastor and the president of the North Carolina society. He worked along with the help of other volunteers, which included Rondthaler. This society created an ecumenical effort on the state and national levels. At a convention in Salisbury in 1899 these observations were made from the conference concerning some of the areas that were deemed beneficial. The fellowship and hospitality was welcomed by the attendees. The young people were given the opportunity to witness about their faith and taught how scripture

¹⁶ Edward Rondthaler, “Doctrinal Instruction,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 35 (February 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

¹⁷ Rondthaler, “Doctrinal Instruction,” *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2.

relates to prayer and tithing. These meetings gave reason for optimism and support from the Province.

The society was not considered a prayer meeting, but an instrument of instruction to train the young for service. In 1895, there were 150 individual societies in North Carolina. However, on January 22, 1937, the Moravian Church replaced the Christian Endeavor Society with the Moravian Young People's Meetings with thirty-two churches participating in the initial meeting.¹⁸ This decision combined the Christian Endeavor Society and Sunday schools together under the supervision of the Board of Education for a more unified and better utilization of the youth and resources.¹⁹

Rondthaler's work as a teacher and pastor with young people can be illustrated again at the Salem Female Academy (now Salem Academy). Rondthaler wrote that prayer had been a constant part of school life at the academy, and that the majority of the teachers and students were professing Christians. Rondthaler wrote of an event that he and the school's principal Brother John H. Clewell were involved in that brought special blessing to the school in November, 1895. This event was an awakening of the Holy Spirit, and a confirmation of the driving force behind the need for discipleship among young people. This awakening occurred when 64 young women gave expressions of praise for Christ. They displayed a willingness to confess and pray not only for themselves, but for their classmates who may not have made a decision for Christ.²⁰

¹⁸ A. D. Thaeler, "Christian Endeavor" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 25 (March 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 4. Thaeler, "Christian Endeavor" April 1895, 5. Thaeler, "Christian Endeavor" May 1895, 4. Thaeler, "Christian Endeavor" May 1895, 4. Thaeler, "Christian Endeavor" June 1895, 4. A.D. Thaeler, "Christian Endeavor" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 7, no. 75 (May 1899) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

¹⁹ Walser H. Allen, Douglas L. Rights, Carl J. Helmich, eds., "Unifying Young People's Work" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 52, no. 52 (December 1936) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

²⁰ Edward Rondthaler, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3 no. 33 (November 1895) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1-2. "And one of the pleasing and happy features of the

Sunday School Movement

The Sunday school movement during the Rondthaler era involves many lay volunteers over a period of years; however there is one man that has to be identified because it was his call to this endeavor that the rest of the work owes its development. The man was James Theodore Lineback.²¹

It was 1884 when the Province was transitioning into a difficult beginning after the decision to merge with the larger Northern Province was declined. If the Province were to survive, it would have to achieve success on its own. Rondthaler described the current status of the Province as not having enough ministers to go around, the outlook of new additions was not promising, and even the work currently being done was unproductive. This situation brought Rondthaler to the conclusion that the province had to do something to produce positive results or face demise. According to Rondthaler, "if it was to succeed at all it must begin first among the children."²²

Brother Lineback was approaching 60 when Rondthaler approached him and asked him to retire from his work at Friedberg Moravian Church and become the Superintendent of the Sunday schools for the Southern Province. Brother Lineback

meeting was the sixty-four young voices were raised to heaven in separate, spoken prayer for a blessing on the meeting to follow the next hour, on themselves, on unconverted companions and on Christ's work in general. Thus each of these girls was bold enough to declare her religion by leading in prayer. It was a warm and encouraging hour for pastor and principal, and promised well for future Christians work in the town. ...The figures of Academy School show a school list of about 350 souls, 250 have openly professed Christ and out of the 100 many of them we dare say are Christians."

²¹ Kenneth Pfohl, "Memoir of Brother James Theodore Lineback", *The Wachovia Moravian*, October 1912, vol. 23, no. 28 (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3. He was born June 27, 1828 and was baptized as an infant in the Salem Church. At the age of seventeen he made a public profession of faith. He was twenty when he taught at the Boys School until he accepted the position of assistant of administrative of affairs for Wachovia working for Bishop Emil de Schweinitz. He changed positions of responsibility again to Provincial Treasurer after the passing of Bishop Schweinitz. He married Louisa Herman on October 17, 1859 until her untimely death on February 6, 1863. He continued working as the Superintendent of the Home Moravian Sunday School until the reconstruction of the Province in 1884 and he became the Provincial Superintendent of Sunday Schools.

²² Edward Rondthaler, "Tribute to James T. Lineback" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 23, no. 29 (November 1912) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2-3.

accepted the job and worked more than twenty years growing the Sunday schools. According to Rondthaler, "Lineback spent many nights away from home, often in humble dwellings, visiting farms, measuring out land for chapels and graveyards, and instructing lay people how to teach."²³ Rondthaler believed that where Sunday schools were started, revivals often followed, bringing souls into the kingdom. The Sunday school work of Brother Lineback, and those that assisted him, turned the Sunday school movement into a successful undertaking for the church. Without it, revival would not have been possible. Rondthaler's recollection of a pastoral visit with a dying friend demonstrates Lineback's Christian character. "Brother Lineback thanked God for leading him on the earthly journey of life, he thanked God for the work he had permitted him to do. He thanked Christ for His sin pardoning grace and he prayed for the strength to accept circumstances that were ultimately going to befall him."²⁴

Prior to 1884 there were some Sunday schools already in existence including Home church, Elm St. Chapel, East Salem, and the Colored Church consisting of 538 students and 59 officers and teachers for a total of 599 on roll. In 1886 Rondthaler reported that Sunday schools were the primary reason for increased attendance, and especially with the young people. In 1887 Rondthaler credited the new congregation of Centerville, located to the south of Salem to the work of the Sunday school. There were also two additional Sunday schools organized that were extended out further geographically from Salem, the Oak Grove and Hope Sunday schools that were

²³ Rondthaler, "Tribute to James T. Lineback," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2-3.

²⁴ Rondthaler, "Tribute to James T. Lineback," *The Wachovia Moravian*, 2-3.

maintained by Brother Lineback and other members of Salem congregation, which also totaled 170 in attendance.²⁵

The work of the Sunday schools and the revival meetings went hand in hand. For example, in December 1888, the Sunday school of East Salem Branch was organized. This was made possible by a series of revival meetings, and the faithful work of the Sunday school, over twelve often difficult years.²⁶ The success of the Sunday school movement can be seen through three separate time frames. In 1877, there were 12 churches. By 1896, 21 places of worship had been added. Then from 1899 to 1932 another 17 were added with the majority of these places remaining churches today.²⁷ The success of the Sunday school program in establishing places of worship along with the annual revival meetings held throughout the province demonstrates that the two works complimented one another. This confirms Rondthaler's vision, which brought new life into the Moravian church.

The Structure of the Sunday School Movement

The Sunday school structure was started by the appointment of James T. Lineback as Superintendent, and also by a committee of three approved by Southern Province conference of May 1894, which Lineback was a member. This committee was given the charge to prepare a program for the first "Sunday School Normal" to be held at various churches within the Province. The "Sunday School Normal" meetings were hosted at various churches. They involved discussion among the workers of the various Sunday

²⁵ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 52, 33, 67, 76 and 74.

²⁶ Rondthaler, *The Memorabilia of Fifty Years*, 81.

²⁷ Crews and Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 434, 512.

schools about topics such as the qualifications of a teacher and the best methods to teach Sunday school.²⁸

Rondthaler remained involved with the Sunday school work by both his attendance at workshops and rallies. Rondthaler was known to hold meetings in the parsonage and on one occasion he met with the Sunday school leadership there. Lineback recorded on May 7, 1896, that Rondthaler met with his superintendents at his home to discuss the need for good quality teachers for the Sunday schools. The concluding prayer demonstrates the leadership's earnest work and their reliance on God's leading. Lineback describes the prayer of those in attendance, "Thus kneeling in Spirit at the throne of grace, a circle of prayers went up, imploring wisdom, and guidance, power from on high, so to engage the Master's work that his kingdom may be spread and His name be glorified."²⁹

A Superintendent's meeting was held on May 7, 1900 where Bishop Rondthaler, superintendents, ministers and lay men and women were in attendance. Some of the agenda items that were discussed were: The attendance and consecration of the teachers and the need for visiting Sunday schools. The need for general knowledge of the Bible and the recognition of Sunday schools by the pastors. The use of a quarterly Bible study guide in Sunday school as a training aid, but the Bible should be the primary curriculum in the classroom.³⁰ The Superintendents coming together with solidarity and passion for

²⁸ Edward Rondthaler and J. Kenneth Pfohl, eds., "The Annual District Conference" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 1, no. 3 (May 1893) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. [Author unknown] "The District Conference" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 2, no. 15 (May 1894) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2. [Author Unknown], "Sunday School Normal" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 2, no. 17 (July 1894) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1.

²⁹ James Lineback, "Sunday School" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 3, no. 35 (January 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 3.

³⁰ James Lineback, "The Superintendents Meetings" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 4, no. 39 (May 1896) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 1-2.

instruction was a result of a clear purpose and sound leadership. The proof that this work was reaping the desired results can be demonstrated by an observation given to Lineback by a member of a Sunday school class, "We are learning more of the Bible in our school than ever before; we have a good superintendent, we have good attendance, and everybody loves the Sunday school."³¹

The Sunday school movement was given affirmation with gatherings like the Mass Convention of Sunday Schools held at Salem (Home Church) on October 31, 1893. This gathering attracted over 2,000 people with music and celebration.³² The Annual District of the Southern Province was held on May 3, 1893, and was attended by pastors and delegates, some of which were Sunday school workers. This meeting was for the general overview of various issues, not specifically for Sunday school matters, but the importance of Sunday school was demonstrated by setting aside time for discussion and prayer concerning issues to improve the work.³³ This type of dedication and deliberate effort, put forth by the leaders of the Province, sent a clear signal of purpose which was a major factor in the success of Sunday school work.

Rondthaler promoted discipleship over several years by utilizing the talented and willing people in the Province. He helped to bring pastors and laity together with a clear and common purpose to spread the gospel to people whether at home or aboard. He recognized the need for biblical instruction especially for the young and used the Sunday school movement to meet that concern.

³¹ James Lineback, "Sunday School" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 4, no. 47 (January 1897) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 4.

³² James Lineback, "Sunday School Mass Convention" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 1, no. 9 (November 1893) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 4.

³³ Edward Rondthaler, "The Annual District Conference" *The Wachovia Moravian*, vol. 1, no. 3 (May 1893) (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives), 2.

Conclusion

The Moravian Church Southern Province, from 1877 to 1930, experienced a significant growth in membership due to the leadership of, Bishop Edward Rondthaler. Rondthaler came to Salem, North Carolina to become pastor of Salem Moravian Church in October 1877, a position he held until 1908. His decision to accept the pastorate at Salem led to a lifetime of ministerial service for him in the South. Rondthaler accepted membership into the Provincial Elders Conference in 1880, a membership he held through 1929. This membership into the PEC resulted in his election as the President of that Conference from 1889 to 1929. He was elected Bishop in 1891 and served as pastor of the Salem Congregation from 1877, until his death. These positions of leadership allowed him to be influential in virtually all the major decisions of the Province and also gave him the opportunity to be engaged in the work of the churches along with his ministers and laity.

Rondthaler's theological foundation was influenced by his understanding and loyalty to Moravian history, which holds Christ as the center of our faith. He taught that God's grace is sufficient, and salvation comes from faith and works are the witness of that faith. He believed in a life of Christian piety, and sanctification was a continual process to be reached for, but perfection was unattainable in this life. An evangelical in the classical sense, he placed scripture as God's authoritative word, which if studied and accompanied with prayer, he believed would provide a guide for the Christian's way of life.

The Moravian church, from the 1850's until Rondthaler's arrival, had begun to embrace camp meetings and revivals. Rondthaler's passion for the lost worked well to

embrace the revivals and to oversee this ministry. Rondthaler's knowledge of Moravian history combined with his belief in spiritual renewal enabled him to create an environment of cooperation and unity between the Moravian traditions and the Methodist camp meeting styles. This collaboration was successful in part due to the ecumenical spirit of both clergy and laity, which produced an increase in membership growth.

Rondthaler's heart for missions and his desire to revitalize the Southern Province was aided by the work of both clergy and laity. This was demonstrated in a proactive approach to home missions through the work of the Sunday school movement. The movement went hand in hand with the revivals to create a positive attitude toward evangelism. In 1877, there were 12 churches and by 1929, a year before his death there was 41, most of which are still in existence today. The membership of the province when Bishop Rondthaler arrived in 1877 was 1,940 members, and at his death in 1931, the membership was 11, 600.³⁴

As scripture teaches in Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NIV) "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." and so it is today. The issues of declining membership and growth, shortages of ministers and people's right to choose the church they wish to attend are just as prevalent today as they were a hundred years ago. The twenty-first century church serves the same God, Christ and Holy Spirit as in times past. In my view the Moravian Church Southern Province needs to preach and teach the Bible in its entirety, but always keeping Christ at the center. Secondly, we need to recognize that we are in constant need of spiritual renewal. This comes by prayer and repentance, and some type of renewal services in order to make that

³⁴ C. Daniel Crews and Richard Starbuck, *Courage for the Future*, 830, 533, 485. The total number of churches listed was 42, but Avalon Moravian Church was lost to a fire in 1911.

opportunity a reality. Thirdly, we need to be more proactive in our evangelism by training and equipping our leaders to seek out people who are without Christ and take the church to them.

APPENDIX A

THE MEMORABILIA OF FIFTY YEARS 1877-1927

RT. REV. EDWARD RONDTHALER

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1877-1908 | Pastor of the Home Moravian Church. |
| 1880 | University of North Carolina conferred upon him the Degree of Doctor of Divinity. |
| 1880 | Member of the Provincial Elders Conference of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church. |
| 1884-1888 | Principle of Salem Female Academy. |
| 1891 | Consecrated a Bishop of the Unitas Fratrum or Moravian Church. |
| 1879,1889,
1899, 1909,
1914 | Sent as a Delegate of the Southern Province to the General Synod of the Moravian Church at Herrnhut, Saxony. |
| 1908 | Relinquished the pastorate of the Home Church to devote more time to the development of the Salem Congregation as a whole and to the Southern Province. |
| 1922 | Received Degree of LL.D. from University of North Carolina. |

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NORTHERN PROVINCE ARCHIVES

Son of Edward & Sarah L (Rice) Rondthaler

Born: July 24, 1842 in Schoeneck, PA

Married: Oct 1, 1867 to Mary E Jacobson of Bethlehem, PA (July 15, 1934)

Children:

Alice J- born July 27, 1868 in Brooklyn, NY (1929)

Howard E - born June 17, 1871 in Brooklyn, NY

Estella Theodora – born Jan 27, 1879 in Salem NC, died June 25, 1879

1858-1862 – Student in the Theological Seminary at Bethlehem, PA

1862-1863 – Student a University of Erlangen, Bavaria

Ordained a Deacon Aug 27, 1865 at Bethlehem Edward Rondthaler (Northern Province)

by Bishop J C Jacobson

Ordained a Presbyter Nov 25, 1868 at Bethlehem by Bishop H A Shultz

Consecrated Bishop April 12, 1891 at Salem, NC by Bishops: H T Bachman

H J Van Vleck

J M Levering

Appointments:

1864-1865 – Teacher in Nazareth Hall

1865-1874 – Pastor at Brooklyn, NY

1874-1877 – Pastor at Philadelphia, PA (1st church)

1877- - Pastor at Salem, NC

(1884-1887 Principal at Salem Female Academy with the pastorate---

1884- Elected in the Prov. Elder's Conference at Salem, NC¹

1889-1929 Became president of the PEC being always reelected 5 times.)

¹ Dr. C. Daniel Crews, Archivist to the Southern Province states that 1880 is the correct date when Bishop Rondthaler was elected to the PEC.

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VITA

Timothy G. Sapp was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina on April 27, 1956 to Otis G. Sapp and Linda B. Shutt. He spent his entire life in the Winston-Salem area and was a graduate of from East Forsyth High School in 1974. He married the love of his life Karen G. Sapp on February 23, 1980, and was employed at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company for twenty-five years. As a lifetime member of the Moravian church, he felt the call to ministry in 1995. In 2000, he graduated from High Point University with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Business Administration, and was a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity Degree in 2005. He also received a Certificate of Theological Studies from the Moravian Theological Seminary in 2006. Reverend Sapp entered the Doctor of Ministry Degree program for Revival and Reform at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with residencies in 2009 through 2011 and will graduate in May 2012. He was ordained a Deacon into the Moravian church in February 2006, and was consecrated a Presbyterian into the Moravian Church in September 2011. He has held two pastorates. The first being at Pine Chapel Moravian Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and his current pastorate at Mizpah Moravian Church in Rural Hall, North Carolina.